ADELAIDE DE NARBONNE,

WITH MEMOIRS OF

CHARLOTTE DE CORDET.

A TALE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

HENRY OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

" War! civil war!
" Enſanguin'd fury, with each horror fraught,
" Pour'd forth by vengeful Heav'n on erring man,
" To humble human pride, and prove how weak
" Is boaſted wiſdom, when o'er reaſon's bounds
" Wild paſſion holds the ſway!"

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" Regretter ce ceux qu'on aime, eſt un bien, en comparaiſon de
" vivre avec ce qu'on haït."

ROCHEFAUCAULT.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ADELAIDE

DE

NARBONNE.

CHAP. I.

" Time's wheel moves on,
" With life's dread changes fraught."

SACRIFICED in early youth to the avaricious diſpoſition of a deſpotic and ambitious father, Adelaide de Narbonne had the ſupreme felicity of finding herſelf a widow almoſt from the hour ſhe became a bride.

As ſhe was univerſally adored in the neighbourhood, and had never concealed her unconquerable averſion to this union, ſo ſudden an emancipation

from the heavy chains parental authority had impoſed upon her, was conſidered as a fortunate circumſtance by all her acquaintance; and ſhe had now nearly completed her ſeventh luſtre in a ſtate of "ſingle bleſſedneſs," when a haſty ſummons, on buſineſs of an important, but private nature, required her immediate preſence in the capital. Fond of independence, and attached to retirement from inclination, ſhe had long and uniformly rejected every idea of renewing ſimilar engagements with thoſe into which ſhe had formerly entered with ſo much reluctance. The world and its enjoyments were by her viewed with indifference; conſequently it was not without regret that ſhe ſaw herſelf once more compelled to enter it, and quit her peaceful country reſidence "for the buſy haunts of men," in the now agitated and ſanguinary city of Paris.

To perſevere in retaining the free, but ſolitary condition of widowhood, had hitherto apparently been the Counteſs's determined intention. But weak are the reſolutions of a woman not yet in the decline of life.—Every one concluded that Madame de Narbonne would never a ſecond time appear at the altar of Hymen, and Madame de Narbonne certainly concluded ſo herſelf: what then was the aſtoniſhment of the neighbourhood when Madame de Narbonne returned from the metropolis with a huſband!—a huſband too in appearance every way

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the reverſe of herſelf in temper and diſpoſition! Strange as this circumſtance may be thought, it is nevertheleſs true; and, ſhould any inconſiſtency be remarked in it, let thoſe, whom it may concern, apply to that heterogeneous compoſition, *Human Nature*, for a ſolution of the caſe, and its attendant difficulties. At preſent matters of greater conſequence demand our notice.

Uncontrouled miſtreſs of herſelf and actions, it could not, of courſe, be ſuppoſed that her inclinations had ſuffered any violence by ſubmitting to ſo unexpected a change of ſituation; yet the ſoft traces of melancholy, long viſible on her beautiful countenance, ſeemed conſiderably deepened ſince her myſterious journey to the capital had taken place. Nothing indeed beſpoke an increaſe of happineſs, though ſurrounded with all the advantages that are generally imagined conducive to its attainment. Indebted to nature and education for every endowment, every amiable qualification hitherto poſſeſſed by the mind of woman, her face and figure were formed in a mould worthy of the ſoul that in earlier days had once illumined them. Her height roſe to the majeſtic; her manners were femininely mild, and elegant; every movement was graceful, every thought and look replete with good ſenſe, innate modeſty, benevolence, and ſenſibility. Her eyes were a deep blue; her hair a light brown,

with dark eyebrows and laſhes. Though verging on her thirty-fifth year, ſhe appeared conſiderably younger:—the tranquil and regular ſtyle of life in which ſhe had long indulged, contributed, no doubt, to this deception. The bloom of early youth was however fled; but the ſtriking expreſſion of her fine features had become more intereſting, and her figure preſerved all its priſtine attractions. This fabric, ſo nearly allied to perfection, ſeemed, nevertheleſs, now haſtening faſt to decay. Secret grief, that ſlow but ſure underminer of the human frame, already began to ſap its fragile foundations, and, in ſpite of every endeavour to the contrary, too plainly diſcovered that the world and its concomitant miſeries bore hard upon a conſtitution ill calculated to reſiſt their depredations.

The caſe, however, was widely different with M. de la Ville;—he entered upon his newly acquired poſſeſſions with much the ſame kind of pleaſurable ſenſations as thoſe experienced by *that reſpectable* character, the *owner of a Guineaman*, while ſurveying his cargo of human merchandiſe on its firſt departure from the coaſt of Africa. Heedleſs of the means by which it has been procured, he coolly reckons over ideal profits, without once taking into conſideration thoſe future and numberleſs accidents which may probably occur to diſappoint expectation before the veſſel arrives at the

" man-

"man-degrading mart" in the Weſt. With feelings of a ſimilár deſcription did M. de la Ville contemplate the venerable and magnificent Caſtle of Narbonne and its extenſive domains, as he led its dejected looking heireſs up to the gate of the firſt court, and, proudly ſwelling with ideas of ill-concealed importance, whiſpered to himſelf, with a haughty air—"All that I now ſee, is henceforth mine!"—In fact, M. de la Ville was one of thoſe conſiderate perſonages who ever faithfully adhered to the practical part of a certain old proverb, which informs us "that charity begins at home;" a propoſition ſo intereſtingly ſelf-evident, as ſcarcely to have been once overlooked where it could prove experimentally beneficial to his views or intentions.

Vain, inſolent, and verſatile in temper, the ardour of gratification ſeemed equally unchecked by retroſpection on the paſt, or anxiety for the future. Self was the bloated idol before which he bent; and, provided no impediment occurred to fruſtrate any favourite ſcheme of his own, he cared little whether ſhe, by whom he acquired his conſequence, was happy, or otherwiſe. Madame de Narbonne ſeemed merely conſidered in the light of a neceſſary appendage annexed to the title by which he held his preſent poſſeſſions—not as the principal ſource of their derivation. To ſuch treatment,

however, ſhe was evidently inſenſible; and it was only when he had ſome point to carry, or when the changeableneſs of his diſpoſition led him to an oppoſite but momentary line of conduct, that the intenſeneſs of her feelings became painfully heightened, and her diſtreſs too much for concealment to endure with any degree of patient reſignation.

Rapacity and profuſion, oſtentation and thoughtleſs folly, had no ſmall ſhare in the compoſition of De la Ville's mind; but though in general a ſlave to his paſſions, and often completely blinded by the uncommon portion of vanity which Nature, in a playful mood, had aſſigned as the moſt certain and inoffenſive means of counteracting more dangerous propenſities, he was not, nevertheleſs, ſo continually its dupe, as not to ſee and deteſt at times the ſervility and ſelfiſhneſs of thoſe, who availing themſelves of this prominent feature in his character, endeavoured, by the groſſeſt adulation, to turn it to their own advantage. It muſt be confeſſed, however, that this ſeldom happened to be the caſe; the infatuation of unexpected proſperity ſmoothed the way to flattery, and left but few impediments to its progreſs. It was even tacitly felt as the ſtrongeſt acknowledgment of his own ſuperiority; of courſe, what would have put another perſon on his guard againſt the machinations of the deſigning and intereſted,

intereſted, only ſerved in this inſtance to increaſe the fatality of ſelf-deception, which had taken hold of his ideas from the ſudden attainment of an elevation, once, perhaps, infinitely beyond his moſt ſanguine expectations to reach. He appeared to be ſome years younger than his wife,—no way remarkable in perſon or manners, unleſs where the ſucceſs of ſome favourite project rendered it neceſſary to call in the aſſiſtance of the latter as an auxiliary; and then his whole deportment and behaviour aſſumed a degree of pliability and accommodating ſoftneſs otherwiſe foreign to his real character and ſentiments.

In the domeſtic line, however, theſe gentler traits were but ſparingly adminiſtered. There, as too frequently happens, his natural diſpoſition appeared in its genuine colours, while the brighter ones were reſerved for public exhibition. Apparently not born, and only of late accuſtomed, to figure in the higher walks of life, his education had probably been too ſuperficial to reſtrain powerful or perverted propenſities within the laudable bounds of moderation and ſelf-command. The moſt tranſient knowledge of this man's principles and conduct was ſufficient to convince the world that Madame de Narbonne had rather paired than matched herſelf, and certainly by no means changed her

former condition for a better one. Such a choice, if from choice it proceeded, proved a ſtrong inſtance of the inconſiſtency of the female heart; but as that, in either ſex, is a difficult matter to develope, we ſhall leave the inveſtigation of its intricate compoſition to thoſe who are fonder of, or fuller qualified for, ſo diſagreeable an undertaking; and therefore conclude the ſubject, as Joſephus concludes almoſt every chapter in his book, by ſaying, with all due deference to human nature, that "of this every woman will judge as ſhe thinks proper."

Such ſeemed to be the ſituation of Madame de Narbonne and her Pariſian huſband; and ſuch the ideas entertained upon it, at the commencement of their matrimonial career, in the neighbourhood of La Vendee.

Lineal deſcendant, and ſole remaining heir of her illuſtrious Houſe, the Counteſs had long retired from the world to the uninterrupted enjoyment of her favourite purſuits in the tranquil and princely domains of her noble anceſtors.—There the children of want or misfortune found a ſure relief to their miſery. Pecuniary aſſiſtance, or the ſoothing reſources drawn from a ſuperior mind, as either happened to be required, were ever ready at the call of diſtreſs. Madame de Narbonne delighted to indulge in thoſe ſenſations of mental luxury,

only

only experienced by the happy few, whoſe hearts are ſufficiently humanized to feel the good they diſpenſe to others, reflected back on their own boſoms: and fortunately wealth and inclination here united equally for that purpoſe.

The Caſtle of Narbonne was ſituated in a deep and romantic valley, not far from the town of Fontenay-le-Comte, in the late province of Poictou. Thick and almoſt impenetrable foreſts in many parts covered the high cloud-capped tops of the mountains that ſurrounded the back, and one ſide of the building: here and there the venerable turrets of an old monaſtery, or half-ruined edifice magnificently great, in ſpite of the devaſtations of all-ſubduing time, proudly roſe to view on ſome awe-inſpiring eminence, amidſt trees with which it was nearly coeval; while the diſtant ſound of the Convent bells in the neighbourhood, gave a pleaſing ſolemnity to the ſcene, and in a particular manner led the mind to the calm, ſtill enjoyment of the ſublime meditations produced by ſuch a proſpect. On the front of the Caſtle lay an extenſive park well furniſhed with deer, and completely ſheltered from the variations of the ſeaſon by a number of beautiful and thriving plantations. Several ornamental ſtructures, of a more modern date, were here placed by the hand of ſuperior taſte and

judgment, equally formed for the purpoſes of uſe or embelliſhment. To the eaſt of the park were ſome grottos finiſhed with ſhell-work; and many valuable productions, from the bowels of the earth, glittered on their vaulted roofs. Theſe receſſes were formed in excavations of the rocks, that fantaſtically hung over the river La Vendee, or confined its waters to their proper channel. That ſtream, of late ſo fatally celebrated, here wound calmly along, unleſs when impeded in its paſſage by the intervention of thoſe ſteep and rugged fragments that in different ſituations preſented themſelves to view; then, with collected force, it ruſhed over every difficulty, and daſhing down the irregular ſides of its rocky and towering obſtructions, ſtunned the muſing inhabitant of the grotto with a thouſand undefined ſenſations of horror or pleaſure, as he liſtened to its tremendous roar, or obſerved the white foam of the caſcade partially ſparkling through the verdant foliage in pictureſque and innumerable directions.

The Caſtle itſelf ſtood on a gentle acclivity; the outer court, ſpacious and extenſive, where, in the days of former times, the prancing ſteed, adorned with warlike trappings, and the ſhining coat of mail, diſtinguiſhed by the antiquity of its armorial bearings, were once proudly contemplated, now exhibited

exhibited a very different and leſs hoſtile aſpect. A collection of the fineſt ſhrubs, compoſed of every thing rare and beautiful in nature, met the eye on every ſide; amongſt theſe a thouſand little feathered ſongſters hopped about, fearleſs of danger, becauſe unaccuſtomed to moleſtation; and repaid their miſtreſs with vocal harmony, for being allowed to feaſt, with impunity, on the rich fruit-trees, whoſe luxuriant branches bent beneath the weight of their own blooming and delicious productions.

A number of ſerpentine walks were formed in a grove between the building and the river; theſe ultimately led to the latter, but were ſo contrived, that the ſtranger often found himſelf involved in labyrinths from whence it was difficult to extricate his ſteps. The ſituation of this grove was low, and ſuch as did not exclude the river from view, though the proſpect was occaſionally interrupted by it. On the banks of the ſtream was an extenſive rock, of a gloomy and groteſque appearance, whoſe enormous ſize was in ſome meaſure concealed by the thick, high, and ſombre foliage that ſhaded it round. One ſide of it hung, frowning in terrific majeſty, over a part of the water, which traditional report deſcribed as fatal to venture upon, and never attempted without certain danger. Unlike the inviting ſcenery of the neigh-

bourhood, nothing here inſpired the gay or the happy with a wiſh to explore the rugged paths it abounded in. The human mind, however fond of the grand or the tremendous, ſeldom felt any inclination to viſit this ſpot a ſecond time, at leaſt ſuch minds as now frequented the Caſtle, where pleaſure was the object, and idle diſſipation the means employed for its attainment. Nevertheleſs, in the courſe of theſe pages it may probably be honoured with future attention, though at this time it has only been judged neceſſary to give a general idea of it, and the vicinity of the Caſtle, by the preſent outlines now exhibited to the reader.

The interior of the building was kept in good repair; but Madame de Narbonne had long ceaſed to occupy more than one particular quarter of it, which was furniſhed, though not altogether in a modern ſtyle, yet in a manner perfectly ſuitable to her elegant taſte and extenſive fortune.

The fabric was uncommonly large; the dimenſions exceeded moſt of its contemporaries, and had already braved the fury of ſeveral centuries, when its lineal poſſeſſor gave it a plebeian maſter. The venerable grandeur of its appearance could not fail to ſtrike the moſt ſuperficial obſervers with aſtoniſhment and awe, as they approached it—ſenſations which gradually increaſed almoſt to a degree

of

of enthuſiaſtic rapture, when the magnificence of the ſtructure, and the whole of the ſurrounding ſcenery, broke more fully upon the eye, and ſwelled the mind with recollections of days for ever paſt—of times to return no more!!

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

" To the pure ſoul by ſorrow's fire refin'd,
" Ah! what is mirth but turbulence unholy,
" When with the charms compar'd of heavenly melancholy?"

BEATTIE.

THE Chateau de Narbonne, from a calm and peaceful retreat, where Contemplation muſed uninterrupted, and Wiſdom held her ſway, was now become the receptacle of noiſe, diſſipation, and folly. Continual crowds of idlers were at all times rambling through its ſpacious apartments, criticizing what they did not underſtand, and pretending to deſpiſe what they had neither taſte nor ſenſe to enjoy.—They ſtrolled over this delightful place with

with as much apathy and *nonchalance*, as if the moſt exquiſite combinations of art and nature were too inſignificant to attract obſervation, or merit the honour of their attention.

Sounds of mirth and revelry had long ceaſed to be in uniſon with the feelings of the Counteſs: her inclinations, however, were not much conſidered on the occaſion.—It is true, ſhe was at liberty to retire from the riotous groups that repaired to the Caſtle; and ſuch was her unconquerable diſlike to aſſociate with the common run of them, that it was always with the greateſt reluctance ſhe conſented to make one of the number. Fortunately, the diſſimilarity of character, temper, and diſpoſition, was ſo infinite on both ſides, that the generality of them willingly diſpenſed with the abſence of a perſon, whoſe preſence was either felt as a reſtraint, or tacitly acknowledged as a reproach on their own conduct.

The ſecluded and gloomy ſituation of the rock of Narbonne, ſo called by way of diſtinction from others in its neighbourhood, held forth, as we have already mentioned, no incitement to the gay and volatile ſons of feſtivity; that ſpot was therefore, of courſe, pretty ſecure from intruſion. A ſmall building, of an ancient appearance, lay near it.—This too partook of the dark ſhade of the *tout enſemble*;

enſemble; from ſome ſcattered ruins in the vicinity, it had evidently once been of larger dimenſions, and conſecrated to the purpoſes of religion;—but religion was no longer the order of the day; and muſing amongſt mouldering tombſtones proved but a dreary occupation, not much adapted to the ſtyle of amuſements now in requiſition at the Caſtle of M. de la Ville.—He himſelf had never ſeen it above once, and even then left it in diſguſt, though his view of it was but tranſient. He had remarked that his wife ſeemed to have a particular predilection for the walks that led towards it. Officious curioſity made no ſmall part of his character, and he ſometimes even fancied an air of jealouſy added to his importance. The latter whim did not, indeed, frequently prompt him to break in upon the ſolitary moments of the Counteſs. One day, however, it had that effect, and he was ſeized with an inclination to diſcover the powerful charm that could make her prefer the dull and dreary ſtillneſs of that lonely retreat, to the more ſprightly joys of the Caſtle, the ſong and the dance, in which he and his noiſy companions delighted to indulge themſelves.

The motions of Madame de Narbonne, for ſhe ſtill retained the name of her family, were conſequently

ſequently watched, and her ſteps followed at a diſtance. In a few moments after ſhe entered her favourite retirement, the door flew open, and her huſband appeared on the threſhold.

The viſit was not expected; ſhe was unprepared for company, and he found her in tears. The ſight was by no means new to him; he approached nearer, eyed her for an inſtant, turned upon his heel, and, humming a tune, pretended to examine the pictures that hung round the apartment. De la Ville was no connoiſſeur; but the ſtyle and execution were both too ſuperior not to produce ſomething like admiration. He aſſumed what he imagined a conſequential attitude, and enquired whoſe portraits they were. The Counteſs faintly replied, thoſe of her anceſtors.—With an air of ill-timed gaiety, he thanked his ſtars they could not quit their preſent ſtation to take the former one they had occupied in the Caſtle.

A heavy ſigh burſt from the Counteſs; but ſhe remained ſilent.

"And are theſe the ſprightly perſonages you ſo frequently viſit in this enlivening abode?"

"They are; and would to Heaven——"

"I underſtand you, Madam," cried he, rudely interrupting her with a ſupercilious ſneer; "but

you

you know my averſion to compariſons: I can diſpenſe with the concluſion of your apoſtrophe, and ſo, I dare ſay, will theſe gentlemen, to whom it ſeemed principally addreſſed."—As he concluded this ſpeech, De la Ville walked round the apartment, minutely examining every corner of it.—"What, not a ſingle back door to eſcape by?—No convenient concealment to elude the officious enquiry of a jealous huſband, if critically ſurpriſed by him? Humph!—'tis wonderful! 'tis paſſing wonderful! But perhaps you truſt to the ſilence of your venerable aſſociates. I acknowledge the wiſdom of this confidence; they will tell no tales at leaſt.—Adieu, Madame! I leave you in agreeable company, though, I confeſs, I ſhall ſcarcely trouble them, or their habitation with a ſecond viſit in haſte.—You prefer the dead, —I the living.—*Liberty, free from interruption*, is my motto—*Chaqun á ſon goût!*"

An old grey-headed man, much attached to the Houſe of Narbonne, was arranging ſome flowering ſhrubs near the door. It had been left half open, and curioſity prompted him to become a liſtener. Their new maſter was by no means a favourite with his Lady's domeſtics; ſomething myſteriouſly unaccountable, ſomething even repugnant to their feelings, ſeemed connected with the authority he had

had obtained over them. It was evident that her late engagement had not increaſed the happineſs of their beloved Counteſs, and they naturally wiſhed to diſcover the cauſe of her uneaſineſs. This inclination did not proceed from the idle deſire of goſſiping, but merely with a view to render her any ſervice their faithful, though limited abilities could accompliſh.

The man could not poſſibly hear all that paſſed at this interview; his induſtry, however, was great in ſupplying the deficiencies: and, at any rate, enough had tranſpired to confirm the general idea, that mutual affection no longer formed part of the tie that united his Lady to M. de la Ville. Prepoſſeſſed with this conviction, and perceiving the intruſion of the latter was diſtreſſing to the Counteſs, he determined his aſſiſtance ſhould not be wanting to prevent, if poſſible, a repetition of ſuch viſits. For this purpoſe he readily attended his maſter's ſummons, to guide him back through the labyrinth that ſurrounded the building, in the intricacies of which he had already bewildered himſelf. The various ſcenery, and winding paths, had been unheeded on his way to this place, from an apprehenſion of loſing ſight of Madame de Narbonne, on whoſe figure he kept his eyes conſtantly fixed, while

while following her at a diſtance. His attendant obſerved with ſecret pleaſure the difficulties in which he had involved himſelf, and, predetermined to take advantage of his ignorance, wilfully miſled his ſteps, till at length, deprived of the ſmall portion of patience he uſually poſſeſſed, De la Ville fairly gave the receſs, the Counteſs, and his conductor to the devil, which latter reſpectable character he ſwore had taken the form of his companion to lead him on a pilgrimage to Jeruſalem.

The man had a certain degree of humorous archneſs in his diſpoſition; he ſaw his ſucceſs, and purſued it;—making a thouſand profound apologies for his ſtupidity, he always concluded every ſpeech with apprehenſions for their ſafety, which he feared might be endangered from a neſt of deſperate ruffians, who frequently reſorted to this place for concealment,—proteſting that, though ſo long reſident in that quarter, ſuch was the perplexing formation of the walks, that he had often before fallen into the ſame error, and wandered about the whole night, eluding with infinite difficulty the obſervation of the banditti, and no leſs anxious to prevent himſelf from ſtumbling upon any of the numerous ſnares placed in the foreſt for wild beaſts, or plunging headlong into the pieces of water that were frequently met with at ſudden turnings of the labyrinth.

labyrinth.—In ſhort, after alarming and rouſing every particle of ſelf-preſervation in his maſter's compoſition, and thoroughly exhauſting every bodily exertion, at length, under a hundred well-counterfeited terrors, he brought him to the entrance of a road conſiderably diſtant from whence De la Ville hoped to have found himſelf. There he left him, fully reſolved never again to take ſo much trouble for the ſake of a wayward wife, an old gloomy building, and a parcel of worm-eaten pictures in mouldering frames of the laſt century.

To know any thing about our ſuperiors, however trifling, that others are unacquainted with, conveys to vulgar minds a degree of imaginary importance which they generally find difficult to avoid boaſting of. De la Ville's guide had a fellow-feeling of this ſort; he could not reſiſt mentioning what he had overheard in the receſs;—'tis true, this was but repeated to ſome of his moſt confidential friends at the Caſtle; but confidential friends are not always gifted with the virtues of ſecrecy more than thoſe who entruſt them. The topic circulated round, as uſually happens on ſuch occaſions:—every one applauded Juſtin's management, and all the old domeſtics agreed to adopt the ſame line of conduct on every opportunity, as a means of ſecur-

ing

ing their Lady againſt future intruſions, from a perſon whoſe preſence was evidently diſagreeable to her, independent of the diſlike his own conduct had almoſt univerſally inſpired them with.

But whatever might be the public opinion on the ſubject of Madame de Narbonne's myſterious union at Paris, and the ſubſequent conduct that often was remarked on both ſides, no hint or word had hitherto tranſpired from her to aſſiſt in developing the affair. Naturally of a reſerved temper, which her retired mode of life had probably increaſed, ſhe entered not on any communications whatever, thinking, and perhaps juſtly, that ſuch could now be of no conſequence in removing the ſource of uneaſineſs under which ſhe viſibly laboured; while a contrary proceeding might give it additional weight, by ſubjecting her actions to impertinent inveſtigation, or officious curioſity, and rendering her an object of more general obſervation, of courſe unavoidably injure that ſtrong innate ſenſation of female delicacy, which ſhe had ever been remarked to poſſeſs in an eminent degree.

In ſpite, however, of ſuch conſiderations, had a friend offered to her taſte, it is likely, in ſome hour of diſtreſsful recollection, her mind would have found no ſmall relief in diſburdening itſelf. But

her only companion and participator in early pains or pleaſures was no longer in her reach, and ſhe felt averſe to forming ties of confidence, or intimacy, with any of the females who at preſent reſorted to the Caſtle of Narbonne.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

"Telle eſt la chaîne inviſible des événemens de ce monde."

ABBE MILLOT.

SEVERAL months were now elapſed ſince Madame de Narbonne, accompanied by her huſband, had returned to the ſeat of her anceſtors. During this period Democrats of every deſcription daily repaired to the Caſtle. De la Ville affected to be thought the head of a party; and his great opulence in ſome meaſure obtained a pre-eminence amongſt them, which the mediocrity of his talents, unaſſiſted by the adventitious circumſtances of wealth and ſituation, could never have procured.

Placed, as the Caſtle of Narbonne was, in the neighbourhood of thoſe whom ariſtocratical prin-

ciples had led to arm in defence of Royalty, the acceſſion of ſuch a Houſe as he now repreſented, proved a material object to the Convention at Paris. De la Ville was therefore become a perſon of conſideration, not merely in regard to the pecuniary aid that might be derived from ſo copious a reſource, but alſo with a view to the information which, if judiciouſly conducted, would be obtained reſpecting the manœuvres of the enemy in that quarter. Had not the ſuggeſtions of vanity pointed out this circumſtance to his obſervation, the groſs and unceaſing adulation, poured upon him from the ſycophants that ſurrounded him, muſt have ſoon made the diſcovery; of courſe, ere the expiration of the fourth month after his arrival, De la Ville began to be ſenſible that the practice of ſimulation and diſſimulation was equally neceſſary to the grand purpoſe of ſelf-advancement, if ever he hoped to reach that degree of conſequence which he aimed at in the political world.

In purſuance of this idea, he determined to regulate his conduct accordingly. The firſt ſtep requiſite on the occaſion, was to endeavour at ingratiating himſelf into the good opinion of thoſe families in the vicinity, ſuſpected of entertaining ſentiments inimical to the ſovereignty of the French people.

Art and low cunning often miſtake their way

when they attempt to explore the paths of ſuperior wiſdom; common ſenſe is too hard for them, and the farther they wander from ſincerity, the deeper they become entangled in the net ſpread for the deſtruction of others.—Though De la Ville flattered himſelf with having become an adept in the reſpectable ſcience he had adopted, yet it happened in this caſe, as it does in moſt caſes of duplicity, that he was frequently over-reached, where he vainly imagined himſelf the over-reacher.

It was not to be ſuppoſed but the armed force of La Vendee would be equally awake to its own intereſt, and as anxious to ſeize every incident favourable to its wiſhes, as the moſt ſanguine partiſan of the Convention could poſſibly be. The opening that De la Ville now offered for that purpoſe was therefore eagerly, though cautiouſly accepted; and private war the true, but public cordiality and good neighbourhood the oſtenſible motive, that collected both ſides to perform on the ſame theatre.

This compoſition of jarring politics was however productive of one good thing at leaſt; the mixed ſociety it gave birth to, procured the means of ingreſs at the Caſtle of Narbonne to many perſons of real worth and merit, whom the hardneſs of the times obliged to act with circumſpection,

tion, and who conſequently would not have ventured hither without the plauſible pretext now furniſhed them by its new-made owner.

By viſiters of the above deſcription, Madame de Narbonne's ſituation was viewed with real, but ſilent regret. At periods like the preſent, every one is jealous of his neighbour; and the verſatility of many characters conſtitutes it common prudence to be ſo. No wonder then if ſhe, who was already feelingly and fatally convinced of the contraſt between her huſband's principles and her own, ſhould look with a ſuſpicious eye on all who appeared eager to cultivate an intimacy or acquaintance with him, and inſtinctively ſhrink from holding any degree of communication with ſuch people, beyond what ſituation and circumſtances imperiouſly demanded of her. General ideas of danger rendered even the moſt innocent cautious, and for ſome time excluded many, who were privately attached to her intereſt, from having it in their power to be of ſervice to her, had any opportunity offered for that purpoſe; beſides, the cold indifference and reſerve viſible in her manner, when ſhe could not with propriety entirely avoid them, ſtill proved too repelling to attempt combating, and baffled every intention formed in her favour.

Accident, however, frequently more propitious than the beſt concerted meaſures of human prudence, at length took pity on Madame de Narbonne's peculiar ſituation, and interfered with its friendly aid in her behalf.

Weary of the tumultuous and ſanguinary proceedings in Paris and its vicinity, M. de Clermont retired with his family to a country reſidence in the neighbourhood of Narbonne. The Caſtle and ſurrounding property had but lately fallen into his poſſeſſion, by the death of a diſtant relation; conſequently he was almoſt a ſtranger in this part of the province.

Among the individuals who compoſed his houſehold, was a young lady from St. Saturnin in Normandy, who had long been under his protecting roof, where ſhe had early taken ſhelter from the malevolent diſpoſition of an imperious and unprincipled ſtepmother. Fortunately M. de Clermont was every way equal to the important charge with which he was entruſted. Eminently gifted with a good heart, and ſuperior abilities, the ſimilar qualities poſſeſſed by his young *protegée*, ſoon obtained her a diſtinguiſhed place in his eſteem. Charlotte Anne Marie de Cordet was indeed a moſt intereſting character, and alike remarkable for dignity of ſentiment and benevolence of temper. She

was

was tall and well-ſhaped, of the moſt graceful manners, and modeſt demeanour; there was in her countenance, which was extremely beautiful and engaging, and in all her movements, a mixture of ſoftneſs and fortitude inexpreſſibly attractive. Though the firſt years of her life had been paſſed in a ſtate of literary retirement with her father, and to a highly cultivated mind was added the faſcinating magic of every polite accompliſhment that a liberal education could poſſibly beſtow, yet no ſupercilious airs marked a ſingle feeling of conſcious ſuperiority; no maſculine trait beſpoke the woman of ſcience and learning, beyond what the young and the gay uſually aſpire to attain; unaſſuming in her deportment, ſhe ſeemed more anxious to increaſe her knowledge by additional information, than ſolicitous to make a pompous diſplay of what ſhe already poſſeſſed. Alive to all the milder virtues of her ſex, yet endowed with a degree of mental ſtrength that raiſed her infinitely above the general character of thoſe females who compoſe two-thirds of the univerſe, her black ſparkling eyes turned their penetrating beams with contempt and indignation on the worthleſs individual who injured the cauſe of morality or juſtice, who oppreſſed an inferior, or betrayed confiding innocence to its ruin.

Formed with paſſions ſo ſanguine, ſenſibility ſo acute, no wonder if, during her viſits at the Caſtle, Charlotte de Cordet felt herſelf powerfully intereſted by the penſive, uncomplaining melancholy ſo legible in Madame de Narbonne's whole appearance. Of her private hiſtory ſhe had obtained but a very imperfect account from common report; repeated obſervation, nevertheleſs, convinced her that ſomething of deeper import remained unrevealed than had yet reached the public. M. de Clermont and his family were not better qualified, from their ſhort reſidence in the neighbourhood, to ſpeak on the ſubject. It was ſaid, however, that ſhe had never recovered the ſhock received at an early period of life by the premature death of an only and beloved brother, who had fallen in a diſtant country, where he was ſtationed in a military capacity. As for the loſs of her huſband, that privation was little regretted; the ties which formed this connection were known to have been forced upon her gentle, unreſiſting diſpoſition by a haughty, deſpotic father, who was generally more feared than loved; and her ſpeedy liberation from them was conſidered as a fortunate circumſtance, rather than otherwiſe.

With people of ſtrong feelings and warm hearts, firſt impreſſions are not eaſily eradicated: Made-

moiſelle

moiſelle de Cordet was more and more convinced of this fact whenever ſhe happened to meet the Counteſs of Narbonne. Opportunities, it is true, ſeldom occurred of this kind; for, as we have already obſerved, the Lady of the Caſtle was too much attached to retirement not to avoid every intruſive gueſt, where a poſſibility remained for that purpoſe.

Charlotte was a Republican, but a rational one; ſhe wiſhed for reforms in a Government which even the moſt ſanguine advocate for Monarchy cannot deny wanted them; but ſhe wiſhed not for reforms that were only to ſerve as a cloak for partial and additional abuſes, for actions whoſe atrocity diſgraced human nature, and threw a ſtain on the French character, which ages to come would be unable to obliterate, or do away. She had remarked that Madame de Narbonne, though ſilent when political ſubjects were introduced, yet by no means appeared in ſecret to coincide with thoſe around her, or approve of their opinions. Indeed it could ſcarcely be ſuppoſed otherwiſe. The family from whence ſhe ſprung, had once figured in the firſt line of Nobility, and piqued itſelf on the long roll of anceſtors it could proudly reckon over, from the earlieſt periods of time to the preſent.

That the laſt and only remaining repreſentative of ſuch a Houſe ſhould have connected herſelf with a man of De la Ville's principles, without even an idea being entertained of any alteration taking place in her own, was pronounced to be ſtrange—to be wonderful in the extreme! and no doubt rendered her liable to ſurmiſes of various kinds and deſcriptions.

Quick at obſervation, and already intereſted in the object of it, Charlotte was ſoon perſuaded that the uſual theme of converſation was far from meeting with any congeniality of ſentiment in the mind of Madame de Narbonne. The diſcovery was not a pleaſing one, for it led her to imagine (as ſhe had frequently expreſſed herſelf with warmth on ſuch occaſions), that a diſſimilarity in opinion had hitherto kept them at a greater diſtance than might otherwiſe have been the caſe.

Anxious to diſpel the miſt of prejudice, and eager to convince her that the opinions of the virtuous, the rational, the wiſe, and the juſt, are nearly the ſame on all occurrences of moment, Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſtudiouſly watched for an opportunity to effect an explanation of her political creed, hoping by ſuch a ſtep to leſſen at leaſt the diſlike of Madame de Narbonne, if unable to procure a greater degree of her attention.

During

During ſome time, however, all attempts for the accompliſhment of this deſign proved ineffectual. The favourite retreat of the Counteſs had, it is true, been once or twice mentioned before her; but it was underſtood to be a place ſacred from the intruſion of ſtrangers, and to which gueſts were neither invited nor admitted. A knowledge of this circumſtance rendered her fearful to approach its confines, from the apprehenſion that any appearance of officious curioſity might defeat her intentions, by affording cauſe for additional reſerve on the part of Madame de Narbonne. Her viſits, nevertheleſs, became more frequent at the Caſtle; and M. de Clermont, ſatisfied in his own mind that acquaintance muſt ſoon ripen into friendſhip between characters of their deſcription, always ſeconded the wiſhes of Charlotte whenever ſhe expreſſed a deſire to pay her reſpects at Narbonne.

One day that Madame de Clermont was engaged to ſpend a few hours with a family at a little diſtance from the Caſtle, Mademoiſelle de Cordet propoſed being left by the way, as ſhe wiſhed to ſhew the Counteſs a fine piece of painting juſt received from Paris. Having ſettled the time when her aunt, Madame de Clermont, was to call for her on her return, Charlotte aſcended the ſtair-

eaſe. Finding none of the ſervants in waiting, ſhe proceeded alone to a room, in which, when only a ſmall company, the family generally aſſembled. The ſound of a voice, in a tone of diſpleaſure, arreſted her progreſs juſt as ſhe reached the entrance of the apartment. She ſtopped for a moment, uncertain whether to advance or retreat. The door was ajar; and while conſidering on her next movement, her eye caught the figure of Madame de Narbonne, who appeared to be weeping. Oppoſite to her, but with his back towards Charlotte, ſtood the maſter of the Caſtle, who was ſpeaking with a degree of inſolent vehemence in his manner, that convinced her all was not right, nor the ſcene intended for a witneſs. As his attention was ſolely occupied by the ſubject of diſquiſition, and the ſituation in which he was placed prevented the diſcovery of a viſiter, he continued in the ſame ſtrain without interruption; but the volubility with which he ſpoke, ſo far befriended him, as to render his words nearly unintelligible to his alarmed and aſtoniſhed auditor. Not ſo with the ill-fated object of his reſentment; ſlowly raiſing her head from the table, on which her arm ſupported it, ſhe met the ſympathizing eye of Charlotte, whoſe every feature was ſtrongly expreſſive of mingled indignation and compaſſion. Madame de Narbonne looked

looked at her for a moment;—it was a look of that ſort which indicates the mind totally abſorbed in its own feelings, and conſequently indifferent to every outward occurrence. Charlotte could ſcarcely determine whether ſhe was obſerved or not; for the weeping ſufferer, with a heavy ſigh, inſtantly reſumed her former attitude, without evincing the ſmalleſt knowledge of her preſence. The circumſtance, however, recalled Mademoiſelle de Cordet to a recollection of her own ſituation, and ſhe ſoftly ſtole from the ſpot, leſt the Counteſs ſhould put a wrong conſtruction on her appearance. Yet a thouſand times did ſhe feel tempted to return, and tender every aid or conſolation in her power to the viſible victim of oppreſſion, in defiance of the lordly deſpot, who ruled with a rod of iron over a mind ſo greatly his ſuperior; but, ignorant of the merits of the cauſe, and juſtly apprehenſive that a blind interference might increaſe the miſchief it intended to mitigate, ſhe reluctantly deſcended the ſtaircaſe, and, ſilently taking a volume of ancient hiſtory from a window in the hall, ſauntered towards the garden, hardly ſenſible of the direction her penſive ſteps had taken.

At length ſhe reached an arbour at ſome diſtance from the Caſtle; ſhe ſeated herſelf, and the book lay open before her;—the action was mechanical,

but uſeleſs; every idea was now too much occupied with the preſent, to be amuſed or informed by the paſt. The leaves were inſtinctively turned over, unperuſed, unattended to; and ere long the volume itſelf thrown aſide with diſguſt.

Unable to diſcriminate, or arrange the chaos of conjectures that floated over the ſurface of recollection, ſhe continued muſing for ſome time on the late witneſſed ſcene, and vainly endeavouring to fix on a variety of ſchemes for the accompliſhment of the wiſh neareſt her heart, of being ſerviceable to Madame de Narbonne, when ſhe was rouſed from her reverie by a half ſuppreſſed exclamation, which ſeemed to proceed from ſome perſon in a fainting ſituation.

Liſtening attentively, ſhe heard it again repeated in the ſame mournful accent, and apparently not far from her preſent ſolitary retreat.

The day was by this time conſiderably on the decline; and the grey ſhade of ſober twilight, gradually ſtealing over the face of Nature, ſpread a ſolemn ſtillneſs around.

Startled by the repetition of diſtreſs, Charlotte now haſtily aroſe, and, ruſhing from the arbour, determined to diſcover the ſource from whence it proceeded.

Eagerly

Eagerly turning her eyes in every direction for this purpoſe, ſhe at length perceived a human figure, partly extended on the ground, at the foot of a large tree, againſt which it leaned its head for ſupport.

She quickly advanced to the ſpot, and a female form, dead or dying, inſtantly fixed her attention.

A moment's obſervation convinced her it was the object of her late anxiety, the unfortunate Madame de Narbonne.

Struck with the diſcovery, and remembering what ſhe had ſo recently witneſſed at the Caſtle, ſuggeſtions of a nature very unfavourable to De la Ville flaſhed upon her mind with the rapidity of lightning; and ſhe doubted not but ſome fatal act of violence had reduced his Lady to her preſent deplorable condition.

Reſolved, nevertheleſs, to know the worſt, Charlotte endeavoured to find if ſhe was yet within the reach of mortal aſſiſtance, and anxiouſly exerted her utmoſt abilities for that purpoſe.

She had not long, however, perſevered in the attempt, before ſhe obſerved her own hands and cloaths ſtained with blood.

Shuddering with horror at the diſcovery, ſhe pauſed for a moment in extreme agitation, and uncertain whether to fly for additional aid, or

continue her ſolitary exertions, ſtood for ſome time motionleſs, alternately gazing on the pale expiring figure of the Counteſs, and her own ſanguinary appearance.

A convulſive ſob at length reminded her that the ſmalleſt neglect of the preſent period might prove fatally irremediable. She heſitated no longer; ſelfiſh conſiderations were unheeded by Mademoiſelle de Cordet, when the intereſt of a fellow-creature weighed in the oppoſite ſcale. She inſtantly returned to her employment, and ſoon found a ſmall wound on one of the temples, from whence it was preſumed the blood iſſued. She was right in her conjecture; no other injury appeared to be ſuſtained.

A winding ſtream lay at a little diſtance; Charlotte flew to its margin, daſhed her handkerchief into it, and applied it to her patient's relief. Whether the remedy had its uſual effect on ſuch occaſions, or the raiſing of Madame's head, which had ſunk on her boſom, contributed moſt eſſentially to reſtore reſpiration, is a matter of no conſequence: ſhe began immediately to ſhew ſigns of convaleſcence, to the inexpreſſible ſatisfaction of her now happy aſſiſtant. A plentiful ſuffuſion of *eau de luce* was next adminiſtered from a bottle found in her pocket, and ſhe ſoon appeared to be tolerably recovered.

Charlotte

Charlotte remarked with regret that, in proportion as the mind of her charge was reſtored to a ſtate of recollection, ſhe became ſolicitous to proceed by herſelf through the lonely windings of the foreſt, which, on this ſide of the Caſtle, extended to a great diſtance; and that the firſt expreſſions of her gratitude, poured forth as they had been in low, though ardent acknowledgments, gradually took their former tone of cool, but polite reſerve. Her wiſh to be of farther ſervice, ſeemed indeed ſo diſtreſſing and unacceptable to the object of it, and every way now ſo unavailing, that ſhe reſolved to give up the attempt, and therefore returned to the arbour for the book ſhe had left, after which ſhe propoſed regaining the Caſtle, in hopes that M. de Clermont's carriage might be in waiting, determining at the ſame time, in ſpite of the reluctance ſhewn to *her* company, to diſpatch Madame de Narbonne's maid after her Lady, in caſe the late accident ſhould again make any attendance requiſite.

On quitting the arbour, ſhe mechanically turned her eyes in purſuit of her late intereſting patient, and ſoon perceived that inclination, rather than ability, had led her to perſevere in her ſolitary deſign.

Feeble and ſlow ſhe moved along; and at length totally unable to ſupport her tottering frame,

evidently appeared once more in want of that friendly aid ſhe had ſo lately and ſo vainly perſiſted in rejecting.

Charlotte waited not for a ſummons; ſhe flew to her ſide, ſupported her in her arms, and, with perſuaſive earneſtneſs, entreated permiſſion to conduct her homewards.

The reſpectful manner in which this requeſt was urged, the attention, the ſenſations of heartfelt compaſſion and ſympathy ſo benignly ſtriking on Charlotte's expreſſive countenance, joined with her own feelings at the moment, ſeemed to have made ſome impreſſion on the mind of Madame de Narbonne, who, in broken, incoherent ſentences, eſſayed to convey her acknowledgments, and endeavoured to ſuppreſs the ſwelling tear that conſciouſly trembled in her eye, while ſhe accepted the offered arm of Mademoiſelle de Cordet.

At length they reached the Caſtle, and the Counteſs was ſoon conducted to her chamber. Charlotte ſilently ſat by her bed till ſhe became evidently more compoſed; ſhe then left her to the care of her maid, and haſtened to obey the ſecond ſummons of Madame de Clermont, who impatiently waited for her arrival at the Caſtle gate.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

" What looks can you put on
" To pleaſe theſe men, who are before reſolved
" To read them their own way ?"

SOUTHERN.

M. DE LA VILLE was by no means ignorant of his wife's indiſpoſition; he had learned it from his valet-de-chambre; he had witneſſed it himſelf from one of the windows of the Caſtle, in which he ſtood diſcourſing with ſome newly arrived viſiters, as Charlotte ſupported her through the ſhrubbery. Theſe newly arrived viſiters were people of conſequence in the vicinity; and ideas of imaginary greatneſs occupied the thoughts of their hoſt too much to interrupt the harangue he was then making them on ſo important a ſubject.

Madame

Madame de Narbonne was not therefore honoured by any conjugal or complimentary enquiries on the part of her huſband; but perhaps this ſeeming inattention might probably proceed from ſome ſmall degree of recollected reſentment, produced by the late difference in opinion which had taken place between them.

Though weak and inſignificant in character, De la Ville was by no means inclined to forfeit any of thoſe privileges proudly claimed over the other ſex by that lordly animal, man. Gratitude to a wife conveyed an implication of favours conferred, where they ought to have been received. Such notions he renounced as mean acknowledgments of undue inferiority; and heedleſs of her from whom his elevation ſolely aroſe, he was more diſpoſed to feel provoked that ſuch a circumſtance ſhould be remembered, than to experience any ſenſation of urbanity towards the ſource of it.

It is true, Madame de Narbonne ſeldom or never contradicted him; but ſomehow or other it ſo happened that her looks were frequently imagined to diſplay certain indications of contempt, which a ſilent, but inward monitor converted into reproach, beyond what the power of language was capable of producing. De la Ville was not celebrated for a greater portion of ſelf-command than other matri-

monial

monial ſubjects are ſaid to be gifted with ;—and a trifling inſtance had occurred to exemplify this truth a few minutes prior to Mademoiſelle de Cordet's arrival at the Caſtle, where ſhe had ſo unexpected an opportunity afforded her of commenting on the calm enjoyments of wedlock.

Piqued that no approving ſentiment ſhould gratify his vanity from the lips of the Counteſs, and diſpleaſed that ſhe ſtill continued an unconcerned ſpectator of tranſactions, the ſucceſs of which was ſo neceſſary to his preſent as well as future conſequence, her ſilence at laſt became inſupportable ; and he had been warmly taxing her with mental ariſtocracy, when Charlotte ſo unintentionally became an obſerver of Madame de Narbonne's patient forbearance, and her huſband's brutality. His ſelf-conſequence had particularly ſuffered about this time in more ways than one, and left ſenſations too acute behind it, to admit of any quick ſucceeding ones unmixed with the bitterneſs of paſſionate reſentment.

The late ſcene at the Caſtle, in which ſhe had performed ſo conſpicuous a part, furniſhed Mademoiſelle de Cordet with a plauſible pretence for indulging the ſtrong predilection ſhe felt for the Counteſs ; conſequently ſhe yielded to its dictates, and repaired there on the following day.

Her

Her enquiry after Madame de Narbonne was anſwered by information that ſhe had ſpent a reſtleſs night, and was juſt fallen into a calmer ſlumber than any ſhe had hitherto enjoyed ſince the commencement of her preſent illneſs.

The ill-timed mirth of De la Ville and his noiſy companions reſounded from an adjoining apartment; Charlotte turned from it with diſguſt, as the ſervant in waiting advanced to announce her arrival. The ſky was clear, and the proſpect from the windows too inviting to admit of heſitation as to the moſt agreeable mode of employment till the Counteſs was viſible; ſhe therefore threw aſide the book ſhe had juſt taken up, and reſolved to explore the view that faſcinated her attention. The indulgence of this inclination more than compenſated for the time beſtowed upon it; and ſhe had ſoon every reaſon to applaud the choice thus made for the amuſement of her preſent leiſure.

The road from Clermont was ſo ſhaded on each ſide by trees, that partial obſervation could only be obtained of the ſcenery beyond them. Now the caſe became different, as the proſpect widened—before her nothing could be more ſtrikingly beautiful;—the romantic valley of Narbonne; the ſurrounding hills, whoſe unequal heights were moſtly covered from the baſis upwards with waving foreſts;

foreſts; the variegated foliage of the various productions; the verdant paſtures, where the huſbandman and the quadruped enjoyed the copious gifts of bountiful Nature in her moſt delightful arrangements; the tranſparent winding river, holding its courſe through a magnificent opening between two of the fineſt mountains, and hurrying downwards to the boſom of the ocean, which appeared in awful majeſty, daſhing its proud waves againſt the ſhore, where their violence ſeemed alone reſtrained to impaſſable boundaries by the immenſe rock of Narbonne; the ſombre appearance of that rock, whoſe thick woods excluded the ſunbeams, and even concealed it in many places from view—all formed together a pictureſque *coup d'œil*, beyond deſcription grand and beautiful.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſtood for ſome time fixed in ſilent admiration. At length ſhe began to aſcend the ſtupendous eminence before her: the path was rugged and difficult to attain; ſhe tried another, and after ſome time, and much labour, reached a ſpot well calculated for the purpoſe of ſurveying to advantage the objects in its vicinity. Here again the gratified eye dwelt with rapture on the proſpect it beheld, and contemplation fil'ed the mind with ſoothing delight at every ſtep; till rouſed from her agreeable reverie by the

the ſound of a waterfall, ſhe advanced to the edge of the precipice, and almoſt ſhuddering with horror as ſhe looked over its tremendous, but nature-formed battlements, ſaw with inconceivable aſtoniſhment a frightful cataract of immenſe magnitude tumbling down the awful deſcent with velocity.

Eager to behold it nearer, and from a lower ſituation, ſhe endeavoured, with cautious ſteps, to accompliſh her wiſh, and found the advantage derived from a change of place fully adequate to her expectation.

The ſea of foam rolling along; the continual cloud of ſpray ſcattered round at a great diſtance, and to a conſiderable height; the immenſe view upwards, and that even deriving additional extent from the hazy and humid veil of the miſt which partly enveloped its frowning ſummit, all contributed to increaſe the ſublime grandeur of the *tout enſemble*, and to make a laſting impreſſion on the memory of the obſerver.

* There were two rocks in the middle of the fall; the neareſt of theſe was perforated by the continual action of the river, and the water forced

* Vide Coxe's Travels.

itſelf

itſelf through in an oblique direction with inexpreſſible fury, and a hollow noiſe.

After remarking, with mute and freſh admiration, the ſtriking features of this wonderful landſcape, Charlotte again purſued her courſe downwards, and by a ruſtic bridge croſſed the ſtream, which at that place appeared much agitated. Hitherto ſhe had only viewed the cataract in one direction; but here it opened by degrees, and diſplayed another picture, which ſhe ſeated herſelf on the oppoſite bank to enjoy more at leiſure. The moſt obvious traits it repreſented were, an old time-ſealed monaſtery, erected towards the Weſt, upon the very edge of the precipice, and in a manner overhanging the river; near it a church, and a village or two at a greater diſtance, thickly interſperſed with trees, with a ſmall but beautiful cottage almoſt buried in a grove of olives, and placed cloſe at the baſe of the eminence; its roof ſeemed covered with vines, and jeſſamine and roſes ornamented its front wall, while the back was waſhed by the river. The two rocks above mentioned, boldly advancing their heads in the midſt of the fall, and in the very point of its ſteepeſt deſcent, their tops covered with ſhrubs, and dividing the cataract from three principal branches, formed a noble object for the eye to reſt upon. The colour of this water was extremely

extremely beautiful, being, like the Rhine, of a clear ſea-green ſhade, the tints of which, when blended with the white foam, produced an effect altogether new and pleaſing. Enchanted with ſo charming a proſpect, Mademoiſelle de Cordet recollected not the lapſe of time, dreamt not of extending her walk beyond its preſent boundaries, nor thought of returning to the Caſtle, till rouſed from the delirium of contemplation by the appearance of an approaching change in the weather, ſhe ſlowly, and with reluctance, moved from a ſpot that ſeemed to contain all the beauties of nature, determining, in her own mind, to indulge in a ſimilar inveſtigation when another favourable opportunity offered for the purpoſe.

Before ſhe reached the firſt court of the Caſtle, a ſervant approached, and bowing, informed her that the Counteſs was awake, and requeſted her company.

Gratified by this intelligence, and flattering herſelf with the hopes it held forth, of accompliſhing a more intimate intercourſe with Madame de Narbonne, ſhe quickened her pace, and ſoon found, from the reception ſhe met, that ſhe was not miſtaken in her ſanguine expectations.

An hour glided on with mutual ſatisfaction to both parties; the Counteſs ſeemed more and more

pleaſed

pleaſed with her viſiter; and Charlotte, at her departure, had the heartfelt pleaſure to find herſelf an invited gueſt whenever inclination prompted a wiſh to partake of Madame de Narbonne's ſolitary ſituation.

Charlotte, on her return home, was informed of her father's arrival from Normandy; he had purpoſely come to congratulate M. de Clermont on the late acceſſion to his fortune.

In the courſe of converſation ſhe learned that he had once been acquainted with the family of Narbonne, though for many years ignorant of every circumſtance connected with it.

Her next appearance at the Caſtle conveyed this intelligence; and the Counteſs perfectly remembered M. de Cordet, when his original name (which ſome domeſtic arrangements had occaſioned him to reſign for the former) was mentioned to her. The information, however, was ſoon productive of ſilence; her eyes were fixed on the floor, and a ſtealing tear bore teſtimony to the force of painful recollection; the courſing drop reached her claſped hands as they were raiſed with impreſſive energy for a moment towards Heaven. A favourite little dog repoſed on her knee; his ſlumbers were interrupted by an inſect buzzing round him; he ſuddenly ſtarted up, and ſnapped at it. The

movement recalled her wandering thoughts, and after a deep ſigh to the memory of times for ever paſt, ſhe renewed the former ſubject, by expreſſing a wiſh to ſee M. de Cordet before his departure from Clermont. Charlotte aſſured her nothing could afford her father greater pleaſure than ſuch a permiſſion would be productive of. An hour in the following day being named for his viſit, ſhe ſoon after left the apartment of the Counteſs, and was proceeding to her carriage, when ſhe was met by the maſter of the Caſtle, who abruptly accoſting her, requeſted to know whether her frequent conferences with Madame were intended to convert, or be converted? Charlotte eyed him with that look of dignified ſerene ſuperiority which makes inferior beings ſink into nothing before it, and coolly demanded his meaning. The flippant air with which he had approached her, diſappeared; he ſhrunk into himſelf for a moment; but his ſpirits ſoon rallied again, and his diſpoſition reſumed its uſual portion of ſelf-ſufficiency.

Charlotte was paſſing on without paying him the compliment of waiting for his anſwer, when he accoſted her a ſecond time with ſomething of a ſimilar interrogation, accompanied by an attempt to take her hand, which ſhe was upon the point of withdrawing with an air of haughty reſerve, when the

the recollection occurred that a quarrel with a man of his capricious temper might eſſentially injure the hopes ſhe had now reaſon to entertain of effecting an intimacy with his wife. This apprehenſion no ſooner preſented itſelf, than ſhe endeavoured to reſtrain every indication of contempt; and aſſuming an appearance of attention, calmly requeſted an explanation of his queſtion.

This ſhe quickly found proceeded from the old channel—a thorough conviction of the ariſtocratical errors of the Counteſs, and an inſinuation that her own ſentiments were in danger of perverſion from the frequency of her late intercourſe with the former.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet pretended to laugh at the idea of her apoſtacy.

She remarked, however, that he ſtill retained a look of incredulity; and to efface it if poſſible, proceeded in a more ſerious tone to give him a philippic againſt the enemies of the French nation, and a ſpirited diſſertation on the immaculate Rights of Man. She afterwards aſſured him that political ſubjects made no part of her converſation with Madame de Narbonne, and concluded with avowing herſelf a Republican on principle.

During her harangue, De la Ville's countenance underwent ſeveral changes; her reaſoning was ſo

juſt, and her elocution ſo graceful, eaſy, and perſuaſive, that, in ſpite of his uſual vanity, he found himſelf ſecretly forced to acknowledge that a woman was for once his ſuperior in abilities.

He affected, however, a ſarcaſtic ſmile at the end of her laſt ſentence, and, recovering from his late momentary ſenſation of modeſty, informed her, with a look of importance, that a near relation of Marat's was ſhortly to honour him with a viſit at the Caſtle, who, he truſted, would be able to convince her that reformers of governments, and leaders of great national revolutions, muſt frequently ſoar beyond the narrow boundaries of what ſhe ſtyled principle, otherwiſe their labours would not avail, nor their views be accompliſhed.

He was proceeding to ſtate his own merits on this head, when Charlotte, with a glance which he well knew how to interpret, aſſured him of her confidence in his good intentions, and proteſted ſhe equally aſſented to the former part of his axiom, as the practice of the party had fully, ſhe ſaid, proved their conviction of its utility.

She then haſtily ſtepped into the carriage, leſt the ſymptoms of riſing contempt, ſhe could no longer ſuppreſs, ſhould have become too viſible.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

" Our unhappy ſex
" Too much ſubjected to your tyrant force."

THOMSON.

" Force, and the wills of our imperious rulers,
" May bind two bodies in one wretched chain;
" But minds will ſtill look back to their own choice."

ROWE.

CHARLOTTE'S democratical creed was founded on the pure baſis of equity; it required not the faſhionable auxiliaries of anarchy and bloodſhed for its ſupport; ſhe had once admired Marat as a patriot, and a great man, for ſuch he had been repreſented to her; his ſanguinary pro-

ceedings now only inſpired her with deteſtation and horror.

The intelligence of his nephew's expected arrival was far from pleaſing; ſhe knew him to be artful, deſigning, and treacherous, equally capable of forming and executing deeds of the firſt atrocity.

De la Ville's communication of courſe occupied her thoughts as ſhe drove back to Clermont.

The Conſtitution of 1791 was her favourite topic; the preſent ſyſtem of terror met her warmeſt reprobation. This young Marat was a ſupporter of the latter, and a friend to every ſpecies of barbarous devaſtation, where ſelf-intereſt pointed to it as the means of ſecuring ſucceſs in any coveted object of purſuit; ſhe therefore doubted not but that he came intentionally to found how matters were conducted in that quarter, and to lay his future plans according to the diſcovery.

De la Ville, under the influence of ſuch a character as Auſtin Marat, could only become truly formidable, and in that caſe might be the means of driving things to dreadful extremities—extremities which moſt probably would injure the cauſe they were meant to ſupport, but certainly could produce no permanent advantages to it.

Charlotte's

Charlotte's reflections on this ſubject were at length interrupted by her arrival at Clermont; ſhe then acquainted her father with Madame de Narbonne's invitation to the Caſtle, and mentioned the melancholy impreſſion a recollection of him had occaſioned; entreating, at the ſame time, he would gratify her curioſity by accounting for it, if poſſible. As the reſt of the family united in this requeſt, M. de Cordet readily agreed to give them ſome of the particulars of a hiſtory, the latter events of which he confeſſed himſelf totally ignorant of. We ſhall ſubjoin thoſe he was enabled to recite, together with an account of his interview with the Counteſs, in Charlotte's own words, as communicated to a friend at Paris.

TO MADAME DUVAL, AT PARIS.

"I wrote to you formerly of my increaſing intimacy with the intereſting Counteſs of Narbonne—of the obſervations made upon her unaccountable union with this ſtrange De la Ville, and a thouſand other circumſtances relative to the ſame myſterious ſubject. Since my father's arrival at

Clermont, I have had an opportunity of collecting ſome further particulars, with which we were hitherto unacquainted:—theſe, though trifling, fell within the ſphere of his own knowledge, conſequently may be depended upon.—I ſhall therefore comply with your requeſt, and by a repetition of them, reſume a topic, the elucidation of which you ſeem to have ſo deeply at heart; though, I am ſorry to add, it will not be in my power to afford you that gratification beyond a certain degree at preſent.

"Madame de Narbonne had an only brother; their attachment to each other was proverbial; no two perſons, born of the ſame parents, were ever more cloſely united in the bonds of affection. The young Count, however, was early ſnatched away by the premature hand of ſudden death. Part of the hereditary poſſeſſions of the family deſcended in the male line to a nephew of their father's, who then became heir apparent to his couſin.

"At the time of her brother's death, Adelaide had not cloſed her ſixteenth year. Her grief was inexpreſſible. Time, in regard to her, ſeemed to have loſt its uſual effects, and rather increaſed her melancholy, than leſſened its force. But as any thing out of the hacknied courſe of common occurrence is liable

liable to an immenſity of conjecture, and gives riſe to a variety of opinions, ſome people concluded that the diſtreſs ſhe evinced, and the tears ſhe was often ſeen to ſhed, were not more owing to the loſs of her brother, than to the haſty and peremptory reſolution now formed by the old Count, to unite her with his ſucceſſor, for whom ſhe had never manifeſted the ſmalleſt preference; and, beſides, ſhe was ſo far from entertaining any particular predilection for the matrimonial ſtate, that, if appearances were to be credited, an indifference almoſt amounting to averſion was viſibly aſſociated in her mind with every idea of wedlock;—this being conſidered, it was deemed an unnatural exertion of parental authority ſo ſtrenuouſly to inſiſt on obedience to commands, a compliance with which, ſhe had repeatedly aſſured her father, would render her eternally miſerable. His perſeverance appeared more extraordinary when the very recent deceaſe of his only ſon was recollected, and that ſhe, whom he thus tormented, was heireſs to his immenſe perſonal property, together with the magnificent ſeat of Narbonne, and landed poſſeſſions of conſiderable extent; not to mention that ſhe was the ſole remaining prop left to comfort and ſupport him through the cheerleſs evening of old age, into which he was at this time pretty far advanced.

" But the rich ſucceſſion which would fall to his brother's ſon was not to be alienated from the more immediate branch of his own family, nor the noble title of Narbonne ſunk in oblivion by his daughter giving her hand hereafter to thoſe who might probably not be honoured by any patrician diſtinction.

" Ambition and parental deſpotiſm are proof againſt natural affection or feeling, where avarice has lent its aid to exile the latter from its councils.

" In vain Adelaide entreated for a reſpite during the earlier days of ſorrow; her requeſt was diſregarded, and ſhe was ordered inſtantly to receive him, who had now taken her brother's name and place, as her future huſband, if her father's favour was hereafter to be conſidered as a matter of any importance.

" Don't you execrate ſuch a tyrant? I do.—Human nature one would think has enough to ſtruggle with, as unavoidable attendants on mortality, without increaſing the burden by endeavours of our own for that purpoſe.

" Luckily, however, for the young lady, her *indulgent* parent was ſeized at this identical juncture with a family complaint, to which he had long been occaſionally ſubject; the marriage of his daughter was conſequently deferred for the preſent, in ſpite

of his kind intentions to the contrary. It likewiſe fortunately happened that before he attained a ſtate of convaleſcence, the intended huſband found himſelf under the neceſſity of repairing to his regiment, which was then on a foreign ſtation;—nevertheleſs, revolving time at length brought back the ſource of anguiſh in the perſon of M. de Narbonne. Entreaties were again ineffectual!—The old Count ſtill retained his mental diſeaſe, though now tolerably free from corporeal ones. His daughter was of that gentle order of beings who bend to the ſtorm, but cannot brave its fury. Deſpair ſupplied the place of fortitude; it appeared in the guiſe of reſignation, and it anſwered her father's purpoſe to take the ſemblance for reality.

"M. de Narbonne had only been returned to France a few days prior to that fixed upon for the ſolemnization of his nuptials; he had much regimental as well as private buſineſs to tranſact on his arrival; and an indiſpoſition he felt hanging about him, was aſcribed to the warmth of the weather, and the continual hurry he had been conſequently kept in.

"On the morning on which he led his reluctant victim to the altar, his diſorder, in ſpite of every effort to conceal it, became viſible to all who ſaw

him, and long before the evening commenced, the nature of it had ceaſed to be doubtful.

" Amongſt the ſoldiers who returned with him to Europe, were a number of children, ſome of whom, unknown to their parents, had caught the infection of the ſmall-pox about the time of their embarkation: their confined and uncomfortable ſituation on board the veſſel, together with the want of many neceſſaries requiſite on the occaſion, generally brought the criſis of the diſorder to a fatal termination.

" M. de Narbonne believed himſelf out of danger, from a ſuppoſition that he had formerly had the ſame complaint.

" He was miſtaken however.

" The hurry and conſequent fatigue he had undergone ſince his landing, increaſed the natural virulence of the diſtemper. A few hours after his ill-omened union, he was put to bed in a ſtate of raging delirium, from whence he was only removed to be laid in the laſt receptacle of his noble, but mouldering anceſtors!

" The widowed bride had the good fortune to be deſervedly adored in the neighbourhood. As the reluctance with which ſhe gave her hand to M. de Narbonne was no ſecret, every one rejoiced in the emancipation of their favourite, in propor-

tion

tion to the eſteem ſhe was held in, and the deteſtation with which they had long reprobated the haughty, unfeeling, tyrannical diſpoſition of the old Count, whoſe ſuppoſed diſappointment they felt a particular pleaſure in dwelling upon, till the ſubject grew ſtale, and, like other ſubjects of general inveſtigation, ſunk at length into oblivion with the cauſe of it—the unfortunate M. de Narbonne, who was ſoon no more remembered by the public, than if he had never exiſted. He poſſeſſed too much of his quondam father-in-law's temper to ſtand high in the opinion of the world; and his indelicate proceedings in the conduct of his matrimonial ſcheme was not conducive towards a change of ſentiment in his behalf.

" Adelaide, it may be imagined, ſuſtained her reſtoration to freedom with Chriſtian patience;—indeed, it muſt be confeſſed, no galley ſlave ever felt the bleſſings of liberty more ſenſibly.

" Nevertheleſs, whatever mental relief the circumſtance ſecretly afforded, ſhe ſuppreſſed all improper indications of it, and obtained, by the happy medium obſerved in her appearance, that applauſe which her conduct in ſo nice a conjuncture entitled her to receive.

" As for her *indulgent* parent, he conſoled himſelf with the pleaſing reflection, that if his intentions

intentions had been in ſome degree fruſtrated, the diſappointment could not be aſcribed to too great a portion of natural affection; beſides, Adelaide had acquired a conſiderable acceſſion of wealth by the demiſe of her huſband, and the marriage ſettlements had determined that the family name was to deſcend with it to the lateſt poſterity. Theſe were advantages that fully compenſated for the trifling incident of his premature death, particularly when the old Count recollected (and his memory ſeldom failed him on ſo momentous a ſubject) that the union of M. de Narbonne's eſtate with his own, in the perſon of his daughter, excluded, in all human probability, any future chance of diſmemberment, and by the extenſive influence it beſtowed, ſecured it in the channel he himſelf had marked out againſt the attempts of any unforeſeen competitor, who might hereafter riſe up to diſturb the lineal deſcendant in the poſſeſſion of it.

" Such were the motives for reſignation, as explained in the Count de Narbonne's vocabulary of feelings.

" The contemplation of thoſe agreeable topics was not, however, much longer reſerved for this conſiderate old Nobleman to expatiate on;—before cuſtom and decency had terminated the period of his

his daughter's perſonal mourning, he died, and was alſo gathered to his forefathers!

"What now occaſioned the continuance of that melancholy dejection which pervaded the whole appearance of the young Counteſs?—Freed from the heavy chains of wedlock on the very day ſhe was fettered with them, and emancipated from the rigorous dominion of a deſpotic father, the world ſaid it muſt proceed from the recollected loſs of her brother, which had formerly been ſo deeply regretted; and the world's aſſertion was immediately taken for granted.

"Some people, nevertheleſs, preſumed to differ from the opinion of the world; but having no data to go upon, nor matter-of-fact evidence to adduce in ſupport of their idea, they were overruled, and the world perſevered in maintaining it was right in its judgment.

"Indifferent to the vague ſurmiſes of that omnipotent inveſtigator of the human mind, Madame de Narbonne inſenſibly became more tranquil, though cheerfulneſs was no longer an inmate of her boſom.

"She was now at liberty to purſue the bent of her own inclinations.—Theſe, it is true, led her to retirement, but not to inaction. The means of indulgence were largely in her power; and the princely

princely fortune ſhe enjoyed was not leſs a ſource of gratification to herſelf than a bleſſing to her fellow-creatures. Immenſe as were the ſums expended in the cauſe of humanity, enough ſtill remained for other purpoſes; and numberleſs improvements, executed with infinite taſte and judgment, added new charms to the beauties Narbonne had long been famed for poſſeſſing. Many of theſe I have already ſeen, and ſhall ſeize the firſt favourable opportunity for making myſelf miſtreſs of the remainder. Scenes ſo faſcinating can only be viewed with indifference by the man who calls himſelf their preſent owner—the man whoſe powers ſeem as incapable of diſcriminating the charms of his ſituation, as of paying due reſpect to the merit of her by whom he is exalted to an eminence ſo unſuitable to his original character and deportment.

" Madame de Narbonne's connection with De la Ville, ſo repugnant to every part of her former conduct in life, ſtill remains too much enveloped in myſtery to admit of my inveſtigation. —On this head my father is equally in the dark with the reſt of the world; if appearances, however, are to be truſted, there is ſome black hiſtory behind, which time or accident may hereafter unravel. Adieu, my friend! I am unavoidably interrupted.

" CHARLOTTE DE CORDET."

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

" I now return to the ſubject I was formerly prevented from entering upon—I mean my father's viſit to the Counteſs of Narbonne.

" The laſt time they had met, was about the period of her brother's death—an intereſting era for remembrance to dwell upon! The tear that officiouſly ſtole over her varying cheek as ſhe roſe to receive him, too plainly evinced that the bitter catalogue of her earthly calamities was not yet indelibly obliterated from the bleeding tablet of memory.

" In vain ſhe attempted to bid him welcome; the half-formed ſentence faintly expired on her lips. —At length, with an expreſſion of countenance I ſhall never forget, ſhe gracefully extended her hand, and motioned for him to be ſeated near her.

" Still, however, ſhe ſeemed fearful of truſting her voice, which agitating her the more ſhe reflected on the uncommon reception given to her old friend, at length recalled a greater degree of compoſure.

" Unfortunately at this moment ſhe raiſed her head from the arm on which it leant, and turned round to addreſs my father. Her eye met his fixed

upon

upon her in melancholy contemplation, and the remembrance of days for ever paſt, returned again with the quickneſs of electric fire.

" Unable longer to command her feelings, ſhe now haſtily aroſe, and, with her handkerchief at her face, retired to a bow window at the other end of the apartment.

" The mental ejaculation her uplifted eyes here bore ſilent teſtimony to, relieved her heart from ſome of its oppreſſive ſenſations, and my father ſaw he might now venture to approach her without waiting for her return from the window.

" Anxious to change the courſe of her ideas, and prevent them as much as poſſible from recurring to the paſt, he expatiated on the magnificent proſpect before them, and dwelling on the charms it exhibited, with all the enthuſiaſm peculiar to his diſpoſition, at laſt remarked the beautiful mourning appearance of a golden willow that grew a little to one ſide of the view.

" It frequently happens on ſimilar occaſions, that attempts of this nature are productive of very different conſequences from thoſe originally intended; had my father allowed himſelf a moment's conſideration, ſeveral ſurrounding circumſtances would have led him to recollect that this unlucky tree had been planted by the hand of her brother before his laſt, and, as it proved, final departure from

from the roof of his anceſtors;—of courſe it was not the beſt of all poſſible auxiliaries to aſſiſt in effecting his purpoſe.

"Madame de Narbonne looked at him—at it—for an inſtant or two; her heart again throbbed with emotion; ſhe preſſed her hand upon it, and raiſing her eyes emphatically to heaven, pronounced with a deep ſigh—"Thy will be done!" Every idea ſeemed abſorbed in the ſolemnity of this addreſs to her Creator! A temporary ſilence, awful and affecting, prevailed for ſeveral minutes, during which Madame de Narbonne's whole attention appeared to be fixed on ſubjects ſuperior to mortality.

"I ſtill recollect the ſtedfaſt gaze and compaſſionate tear ſhed by my father, as he contemplated her whole figure at this criſis.

"In minds where devotion is ſtationary from principle, and not the tranſient effervescence of deſpair on ſome caſual diſappointment, its effects are always powerful and beneficial.

"The Counteſs was an inſtance of this fact; while ſhe inwardly bowed to the diſpenſations of Providence, her uſual fortitude gradually returned; and ſhe now conducted herſelf with a degree of compoſure that aſtoniſhed all preſent, after witneſſing her late ſtruggles.

"I pretend

"I pretend not to deſcribe my own feelings during the above ſcene—they were too acute to bear deſcription.

"As for poor Madame de Clermont, you know ſhe has the comfortable art of finding every thing fatiguing that is intereſting to others. The frequency and extent of her yawning fits ſufficiently explained the depth and nature of her ſenſations; though the converſation ſoon became general, and the arrival of M. de Clermont gave it a more cheerful turn, yet the demon of *ennui* had ſo completely taken poſſeſſion of her ſpirits, that he was only to be expelled by a number of viſiters, who made their appearance at Clermont a few hours after our return.

"My father promiſed to ſee the Counteſs as often as poſſible during his ſtay in this country; next day, however, I received a meſſage from her maid, acquainting me that her Lady was much indiſpoſed, and requeſted my preſence. I flew to the Caſtle, and found her confined to her chamber by a ſlight degree of a feveriſh complaint;—it was then my attendance became neceſſary. I left her not till the diſorder diſappeared, and have the ſatisfaction to think I now ſhare no inconſiderable portion of her eſteem.

"Should

« Should any future diſcoveries of conſequence occur, you may depend on my punctuality in communicating them.

« With infinite horror I peruſe your accounts of the bloodthirſty Marat's ſanguinary proceedings !—Is there no hand friendly to the rights of humanity, no breaſt courageous enough on the ſide of inſulted Nature to ſtop the progreſs of this diſgrace to mankind ? I begin to bluſh for the cauſe my heart once ſo warmly eſpouſed ! Unhappy country ! Wretched Frenchmen ! was it for this you ſubmitted to the ſubverſion of civil order, to the ſacrifice of your deareſt intereſts !—for this have you waded through ſo many ſtreams of reeking gore ! for this at laſt ! ! !—What !—to crouch under the deadly deſpotiſm of an unprincipled villain, whoſe ſole enjoyment ſeems concentrated in the promotion of every atrocious enormity ! Heavens ! for what have we been reſerved, if tyranny is to prove the reſult of our endeavours, and the reward of thoſe ſuperior ſpirits who have hazarded exiſtence on the immortal plain of Jemappe !

« You tell me I ought to repreſs the warmth of my feelings—that I may lay myſelf open to the malevolence of the very party I favour—that civil wars are hoſtile to ſincerity, and at times like the preſent,

preſent, diſſimulation is not only neceſſary, but often meritorious: you warn me likewiſe to be cautious before young Marat, who has but too much of his uncle in his compoſition, to be truſted. Why comes he here? Why muſt the moſt amiable of her ſex, the unfortunate Counteſs of Narbonne, be ſubjected to ſuch company?—You ſay it is even requiſite, for her ſake, to conceal ſentiments of indignation, which, however well-founded, can be of no ſervice, and are dangerous to indulge in the preſent ſuſpicious ſtate of the nation.

"Well, well—what muſt be, *muſt* be! You know I am not deficient in fortitude either to ſupport, or courage to encounter the varying incidents of human life, as far, at leaſt, as they relate to myſelf; but I confeſs, the idea of my country's ſituation, and the ſufferings of thoſe individuals with whom I am more particularly connected, wring this heart of mine with inconceivable agony, and make it feel at times as if raiſed to the level of actions above the common reach of my ſex.

"How I almoſt envy thoſe inſignificant, but happy mortals, who think not of to-morrow, but can play with a feather while the ſword of deſtruc-

tion

tion hangs ſuſpended over them, ready to perform its allotted taſk!

" Adieu, Louiſa! Fail not to inform me of every material tranſaction that occurs in the metropolis. Our mode of communication is tolerably ſecure, and has hitherto proved anſwerable to our expectations, or rather beyond them.—Believe me, my friend, with great truth, your faithful

" CHARLOTTE DE CORDET."

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

" This woman has a ſoul
" Of godlike mould, intrepid and commanding."

CONGREVE.

OF late De la Ville had not been much at the Caſtle; or when there, appeared to be conſtantly occupied with an inundation of buſineſs. That this was of a political nature, was eaſily diſcovered; private conſultations were often held in a diſtant chamber of the weſtern tower. Thoſe who reſorted to it, knew whom they had to deal with; but they dignified their ſelf-intereſted ſchemes with the impoſing appellation of "patriotic and national." This ſounded well in the ears of their oſtenſible leader, and as for any thing elſe, it ſignified

ſignified not;—to carry their point was the main circumſtance; the means employed for that purpoſe was of little conſequence, while ſucceſs attended it.

De la Ville was of ſome moment to the party. To convince him that they acquieſced in his ideas of perſonal importance was the ſhorteſt road to his confidence. How could he find in his heart to withhold it from thoſe who ſacrificed ſo copiouſly at the favourite ſhrine of Flattery?—It is true, Sincerity was the victim; but *genius plebis eſt fatum Principis* *: and they therefore determined that diſappointment ſhould not be produced by too much faſtidiouſneſs on their ſide of the ſtory.

De la Ville had repeatedly fallen into the ſame ſnare, and Auſtin Marat judged it no difficult matter to anſwer for him to the Convention. The abilities of the latter were indeed too ſuperior to make him apprehend any danger in the taſk. His uncle was well aware of their uſe on the preſent occaſion, and diſpatched him about this time with neceſſary inſtructions for his conduct. Theſe he

* The happineſs of the Prince depends on the humour of the people.

accompanied with a profuſion of complimentary profeſſions from ſeveral of the moſt diſtinguiſhed members of the Convention, and the gilded bait was greedily ſwallowed, as he foreſaw would be the caſe. They paved the way for Auſtin's reception, and quickly opened the ſluices of De la Ville's confidence. Whatever was the motive of this viſit, it proved a ſhort one at preſent, for Marat returned to Paris again almoſt immediately.

The Counteſs kept her own chamber during his ſtay at Narbonne; and when Charlotte called there ſoon after his arrival, ſhe found her in an agony of mind that to her appeared perfectly incomprehenſible.

Charlotte inſiſted, however, on ſharing her ſolitude while he remained, and ſecretly concluded that nothing favourable to the cauſe of humanity was likely to accrue from the advice of ſuch a gueſt. As for the Counteſs, ſhe obviouſly avoided every converſation that led to the ſubject, and was even obſerved to ſhudder with horror if his name happened to be mentioned before her.

No ſooner had this unwelcome viſiter returned to Paris, than a new ſcene of buſtle and confuſion took place at Narbonne.

Ammunition, and arms of various deſcriptions were obſerved to be collecting from every quarter; the

the Caſtle walls were ordered to be put in a ſtate of defence; and bands of men, in the National uniform, frequently performed their evolutions in one of the Courts.

All theſe ſuſpicious appearances, it was pretended, merely reſulted from an intention to overawe the foreign enemies of the Republic, by convincing them that the nation in general was able, and unanimous in its preparations for their reception, ſhould they dare to attempt an entry on French ground.

To the view of more than ſuperficial obſervers, however, the reaſons aſſigned appeared rather plauſible than ſatisfactory.

A meditated attack on the Royaliſts ſeemed to be in agitation; and thoſe noble families in the neighbourhood, whoſe political ſentiments were either fully aſcertained, or ſtill dubious, trembled for the reſult of Auſtin's negociation.

Scenes of rapine and murder had too often accompanied what was called *national reform*, not to be dreaded by thoſe who had once groaned under their ſtroke; ſelect parties were therefore formed with caution, and met in ſecrecy to conſult on the moſt probable means of enſuring their ſafety.

In many of thoſe conferences at Clermont, Mademoiſelle de Cordet made one of the number;

and the ſolidity of her judgment, the calm but quick diſcrimination of ideas, and the maſculine fortitude of mind ſhe poſſeſſed, never appeared more eminently ſuperior than when called forth on ſuch occaſions.—Theſe qualities were uniformly accompanied by the ſofter characteriſtic virtues of her ſex, which tempered with their benign influence all her determinations, and rendered her the delight and admiration of thoſe who beſt knew her uncommon merit.

To the few friends who thus aſſembled at her uncle's, her preſence ſoon became a matter of the firſt conſequence, and ſhe was conſidered by them as miſtreſs of talents and abilities almoſt equal to what the exigencies of the preſent times imperioûſly demanded; while a great portion of innate modeſty prevented thoſe diſguſting pretenſions to pre-eminence, which many females are apt to aſſume on the ſlighteſt grounds of mental ſuperiority.

Charlotte's knowledge of the ſtate of the country, and the real ſituation of ſome of its principal individuals, derived from her participation in the ſecret councils of her friends, enabled her to form a pretty juſt eſtimate of the private ſentiments entertained by many perſons of rank and fortune in the neighbourhood, of whom ſhe might otherwiſe have been ſuſpicious; and conſequently pre-

vented, by motives of prudence, from acting with that freedom ſhe was ſo fond of enjoying, when rambling through the romantic ſhades of Narbonne, and exploring the various beauties its ſcenery exhibited.

Reſearches of this nature particularly ſuited her taſte, and ſhe generally purſued them with the enthuſiaſm of a true amateur.

Leaving her chamber at Narbonne one morning earlier than uſual, ſhe ſallied forth with this intention. The ſun was juſt emerging from the ocean, and his refulgent beams began to dart in different directions through the Eaſtern foreſt. The ſky was calm, clear, and ſerene; the feathered inhabitants of the woods hopped from branch to branch, ſoftly chanting their matin hymn around her. The cattle in the vicinity, riſing from their verdant bed, ſlowly reſmoothed their ſleek ſides with their tongues, and, winding along the edges of the fields, cropped the luxuriant paſture as they moved over it. The deer, in ſportive gambols, were chaſing each other through the park; and Nature, in every quarter, ſeemed to be enjoying thoſe tranquil moments, uninterrupted by the noiſy clangor of war, or apprehenſions of futurity.

As Charlotte reached the boundary of the ocean, and again began to aſcend the rock of Narbonne,

but on the oppoſite ſide of the cataract, a proſpect ſublimely grand and enchanting broke upon her ſight. The ſun, that bright and cheering luminary, whoſe influence has ſo powerful a ſway in the world, here became more conſpicuouſly magnificent, as with majeſtic pomp he brilliantly advanced above the eaſtern horizon, and ſparkled on the boſom of the ſea with increaſing ſplendour; while ſome of his rays, reſting on the towers of the ancient monaſtery, tinged its gloomy walls with a gayer hue, or, ſkimming now more loftily over the variegated foliage that covered the tops of the mountains, trembled in different degrees of ſhade as the ſcarcely felt breeze of the morning gently waved their more flexible boughs.

Gliding along, almoſt beneath where ſhe ſtood, the waves of the ocean in monotonous murmurs impelled each other onward, and diſappeared under the thick ſhade of willows that hung drooping over them; while caſting her eyes at a greater diſtance, ſhe ſaw their white fringed borders diſſolve in a miſty cloud as they ſoftly broke againſt the rocky foundations of the Convent, and died on the ear with a melancholy ſound.

The ſenſation it occaſioned was ſimilar to that produced by the Æolian harp, when ſeated alone,

and

and reading Oſſian's Poems, its deep-toned ſtrains vibrate on the heart with a ſweet but undefinable effect.

The ſoaring lark, "on heaven-born wing," blithly poured forth his ſwelling note, as aſcending the ſky, he hailed the return of day. The chirp of the graſshopper anſwered on every ſide, in reſponſive cadence, the unceaſing hum of ſurrounding inſects;—the dew-drops trembling on every leaf, or adorning the flowery turf with innumerable gems of the brighteſt luſtre—every object, of whatever ſize or denomination, attracted the notice of Mademoiſelle de Cordet; ſhe obſerved them with the eye of a philoſopher, and the mind of a Chriſtian. The reflections that occurred were ſuitable to the ſubject, and fixed her thoughts on the great Director of the wonderful whole, who has appointed every atom to its proper place, and made the ſun, moon, and ſtars ſubſervient to his purpoſe of univerſal good. The contemplation brought to remembrance a deſcription ſhe had lately met with of the firſt mentioned planet, and ſhe repeated it with energy *.—"Oh thou that rolleſt above! whence are thy beams, O Sun?

* Oſſian's Poems.

—thy everlaſting light!—Thou comeſt forth in thy awful beauty, and the ſtars hide themſelves in the ſky: the moon, cold and pale, ſinks in the weſtern wave, but thou thyſelf moveſt alone—who can be a companion of thy courſe? The oaks of the mountains fall; the mountains themſelves decay with years; the ocean ſhrinks, and grows again; the moon herſelf is loſt in Heaven; but thou art for ever the ſame, rejoicing in the brightneſs of thy courſe! When the world is dark with tempeſts, when thunder rolls, and lightning flies, thou lookeſt in thy beauty from the clouds, and laugheſt at the ſtorm; but man fades away, and beholdeſt thy beams no more!—Whether thy yellow hair flows on the eaſtern clouds, or thou trembleſt at the gates of the weſt —— but perhaps, like me, thou art only for a ſeaſon, and thy years will have an end! Thou ſhalt ſleep in thy clouds, careleſs of the voice of the morning, &c. &c."

The concluſion of the quotation ſunk upon her mind, and impreſſively pauſing, ſhe raiſed her eyes to Heaven in ſilent meditation. The little ſongſters that lately ſerenaded her from the trees, had either perched at a greater diſtance, or diſperſed in ſearch of nouriſhment: the "mounting lark's ſhrill note" was ſcarcely heard to vibrate, and he himſelf almoſt become a ſpeck, as he gradually diſappeared

diſappeared in the ſky; the lowing of the flocks no longer murmured in the valley beneath, and ſilence, like the ſtillneſs of death, reigned around!

All at once this temporary calm of nature was interrupted by a melodious ſound iſſuing from the neighbouring monaſtery. Slowly roſe the penſive vocal harmony of the matin hymn; and as it aſcended to Heaven, ſhe fancied its celeſtial inhabitants, reclined on the rays of the morning, were leaning from their happy abodes to bear the pure incenſe of unſullied hearts to the feet of their Creator.

The ſtrains ſuddenly ceaſed, and the ſolemn ſwell of the organ ſucceeded in awful grandeur. A pauſe again took place, and again the ſofter voices of the Nuns once more reached her. In a moment both were ſublimely united, and every pulſation of her heart beat in uniſon; at length, dying away by degrees, the ſound faintly floated over the ſurface of the water, and, except what ſtill vibrated on the imagination, was ſoon no longer perceptible to the ear.

Charlotte for ſome moments ſcarcely permitted herſelf to breathe, and liſtened with eager, but vain expectation for a renewal of the enchanting melody.

Convinced, at laſt, it had ceaſed for the preſent, ſhe deſcended the precipice, and inſtinctively took the path leading to the Convent.

As ſhe approached the venerable ſtructure, tears filled her eyes, while reflecting that the peaceful calm its inhabitants enjoyed (probably originating in that total ſecluſion which had ſo long been enſured to them), was now perhaps on the point of termination; and thoſe ſacred walls, once vocal with their Creator's praiſe, and free from pollution, verging, like other ſeminaries of the ſame kind, towards ſcenes of anarchy and death—converted into receptacles for the ſick and wounded, to be ſtained with human gore, and echoing with the heavy groans of the dying, or razed to their foundations by the equally levelling hand of *civil war* or *modern reformation*; while its wretched inmates, a prey to the licentious ſoldiery, or the ravages of famine,—houſeleſs, helpleſs, and unprotected, linger about the fallen remnants of their late happy and hoſpitable, but then deſolated abode, and as they wander through its ruins, weep over the violated remains of companions in affliction—of friends dear and lamented, torn from their bleeding arms for ever!——Alas!—

" No more the glaſſy brook reflects the day,
" But chok'd with ſedges, works its weedy way:
" Along the glades a ſolitary gueſt,
" The hollow ſounding bittern guards its neſt;
" Amidſt the deſert walls the lapwing flies,
" And tires their echoes with unvaried cries!
" Sunk are its bowers in ſhapeleſs ruin all,
" And the long graſs o'ertops the mould'ring wall;
" While trembling, ſhrinking from the ſpoiler's hand,
" Wan, wretched victims fly the fated land *."

As Charlotte entered the outer gate, the Nuns were retiring from the chapel, and croſſing the court before her. One of the number ſeemed to walk with difficulty; her pace was ſlow, her air melancholy, and her looks intently fixed on the ground. The habit ſhe wore was different from thoſe belonging to the Convent, and Mademoiſelle de Cordet thought ſhe had ſeen it ſomewhere before. This idea made her more minutely obſerve the object of her ſurmiſe, who juſt then raiſing her head to ſpeak to one of the ſiſters, was recognized for a Chanoineſſe of St. Cyre, where Charlotte remembered to have ſeen her, when viſiting a relation of her mother's in that Convent.

* Goldſmith.

A confuſed recollection of the reported diſſolution of the order had lately reached her; and wiſhing to enquire for her friend, the *Religieuſe*, ſhe reſpectfully accoſted the ſtranger.

Madame Veronica's memory did not immediately ſerve her on the occaſion; but no ſooner had Charlotte made herſelf known to her, than haſtily catching her by the hand, and burſting into an agony of tears, ſhe pointed to the door of the monaſtery, and then taking hold of Mademoiſelle de Cordet's arm, moved on in ſilent ſorrow, till arrived at her cell, they entered it together.

It was ſome time, however, before the Chanoineſſe recovered ſufficient compoſure to ſatisfy her companion's curioſity, or liſten to the limited conſolation ſhe endeavoured to adminiſter, ignorant as ſhe was from what ſource her diſtreſs particularly originated.

At length her grief began to ſubſide, and a look of pious reſignation ſpread itſelf over her countenance; ſhe mentioned Charlotte's relation, who had, it ſeems, been dead for ſome time, in terms of eſteem and affection. "Death," ſhe pathetically obſerved, "was not at preſent an event to be regretted.—Ah no!" continued Veronica, with claſped hands and uplifted eyes, "ah no!—'tis rather a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed in theſe times

of

of vice and devaſtation, where innocence is no defence, and only guilt triumphant."

"But how, my dear Madam, came you here?" aſked Charlotte; "ſurely the order of St. Cyre is not, as once reported, diſſolved?"

"*Helas! oui, Mademoiſelle,*" ſhe replied, and again burſt into tears.

For a few moments the Chanoineſſe was once more unable to articulate; at length ſhe daſhed a ſtarting tear from her eye, and thus proceeded.—"Thirty-eight years was I an inmate of St. Cyre, and enjoyed ſuch a degree of content, that I never wiſhed to change my ſituation."—As a proof of this aſſertion, ſhe added, that by a decree of the Conſtituent Aſſembly, when the generality of Convents were thrown open, the Nuns who choſe to withdraw, were allowed, and permiſſion was at the ſame time given to thoſe who were of a contrary opinion, to continue where they were; in conſequence of which, ſhe and twenty-four others had remained, with no farther wiſh than to be allowed to end their days under its ſacred roof; that they were happy in each other's ſociety, and in their being free from all cares, except the important one of their ſalvation. But the continuance of ſuch a bleſſed lot was too much to be granted them by the ſons of carnage and rapine, who, horrid to relate! impiouſly tram-

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ple upon, and deride every thing that is good or holy! The hopes of closing their lives in the abode of their youth consequently soon proved fallacious: they received an order from the National Assembly to quit the Convent, which was destined for other purposes, and were forced to bid it an eternal adieu in ten days after the mandate arrived."

She complained of this circumstance as a great hardship *.—"To be thrown on the world which we had renounced, and for which we have no relish—*Ah, Mademoiselle! nous sommes bien a plaindre!*"—Here her sobs and tears again interrupted her.—"But," continued she, meekly removing the handkerchief from her eyes,—"but it is the will of God, and it becomes us to submit! I ought to be thankful to Heaven for the happiness and tranquillity I have enjoyed, particularly during the last thirty-eight years of my life, which, from my observation, while I remained in the world, and from all I have learned since, has been far greater than the portion usually allotted to mankind; especially for guiding my feet to this holy community, which, alas! may perhaps be also verging to

* Vide Moore's Journal.

destruction,

deſtruction, though hitherto ſpared by the will of a merciful Providence!"

She concluded by ſaying, that, although ſhe had no reaſon to expect ſo much felicity for the remainder of her life, ſhe had the comfort to think that the period of her ſufferings, if more ſuffering was to be experienced, would be far ſhorter than the long courſe of enjoyment which, through the goodneſs of the Almighty, ſhe had poſſeſſed for ſo many years.

"But what became of the other members of the community, when thus forced to ſeparate?" ſaid Charlotte.

"Seven or eight of them," replied the Chanoineſſe, "had agreed to try to keep houſe in Bourdeaux, by joining their ſmall penſions together; the reſt propoſed going to their relations;" but ſhe knew nothing further, not having heard of them for ſome time. As for herſelf, unable to bear the idea of aſſociating with a bad world at her years, and, indeed, having lived ſo long out of it, that ſhe had forgot how to live in it, ſhe had had the good fortune, after undergoing many viciſſitudes, to be received about a year ago by the Abbeſs of this Convent, to whom ſhe was diſtantly related; but ſtill, "*Helas, Mademoiſelle! nous ſommes bien a plaindre!*" ſighed ſhe deeply.

The

The repetition of grievances which Madame Veronica had thus gone through, ſeemed, however, to afford a temporary relief to her mind; and ſhe was afterwards able to diſcourſe with more calmneſs and compoſure, which her viſiter remarking, endeavoured to divert her thoughts as much as poſſible from recurring to thoſe topics that more immediately affected her. They converſed on the beauties of the country around the Convent—of the Caſtle of Narbonne, and the Counteſs; on whoſe virtues and merit Charlotte dwelt with that enthuſiaſm of feeling and expreſſion ſo inherent to her diſpoſition.

"She is indeed all that is good and amiable," ſaid the Chanoineſſe: "this Convent owes much to her power and extenſive benevolence, and the morning hymn or evening veſpers are not more regularly attended to, than the prayers that daily aſcend to Heaven for her proſperity and welfare; but, alas! ſhe too has had her troubles in this bad world—ſhe is not, ah too ſurely ſhe is not happy!"

Ever anxious to learn the ſource of that dejection which continually preyed on the mind of Madame de Narbonne, in the friendly hope that the diſcovery might, perhaps, enable her to mitigate

gate its force, Charlotte eagerly enquired why it was ſuppoſed ſhe was otherwiſe than happy.

"Ah! my dear Mademoiſelle," ſaid the Nun, ſhaking her head emphatically, "that circumſtance is not difficult to obſerve."

"But what cauſe is aſſigned for it?" aſked her companion: "is the reaſon underſtood, pray? Are you, for Heaven's ſake tell me, are you acquainted with any particulars relative to this amiable woman?"

"Why no," anſwered Veronica, "I cannot ſay I am."

The "why no, I cannot ſay I am," was however pronounced in a manner that raiſed ſome ſuſpicion of its ſincerity; and Charlotte repeated her queſtion with much earneſtneſs.

"Not from my own knowledge, I do aſſure you," replied the Chanoineſſe; "not from my own knowledge am I qualified to ſpeak on this ſubject; but it is whiſpered in the Convent that her marriage with M. de la Ville was neither a matter of choice nor inclination. This idea, however, proceeds more from caſual obſervation than any certain foundation to go upon; for the Abbeſs, though well informed of all her affairs, is very cloſe, and never enters on the topic with any of us. Nevertheleſs, we are not ignorant that on the

Counteſs's

Counteſs's return from Paris, ſhe reſided for ſome time in this houſe, and that it was with the greateſt reluctance ſhe was prevailed upon to quit it for the Caſtle of Narbonne. But ſhe is good, and the bleſſed Virgin will reward her!" added the pious Chanoineſſe with fervour; "ſhe conſidered not her own gratification, when put in competition with the ſafety of others. An order arrived from the ſanguinary Marat, commanding the ſiſterhood no longer to harbour her, if they valued their own exiſtence as a community, giving them to underſtand, at the ſame time, in pretty plain terms, that their exemption from the almoſt general fate of other religious inſtitutions depended entirely on their conduct reſpecting her; but in what that conduct was to conſiſt, the Superior never mentioned to us.

"As the family of Narbonne had uniformly been great benefactors to this community, and were on that account entitled to particular privileges, Madame might have cauſed us ſome trouble, had ſhe choſe to diſpute the legality of Marat's mandate; but ſo far from giving the Abbeſs any apprehenſions of this nature, ſhe immediately complied with what the circumſtances of the times required: and though her heart appeared burſting with anguiſh, a look of dignified reſignation pierced us to the

ſoul,

ſoul, as with reluctant ſteps, and ill-concealed emotion, ſhe was led to the carriage, into which her huſband handed her with an air of triumph, which, in my opinion, was not very well adapted to the occaſion; ſince that period ſhe ſeldom viſits us, except on feſtivals, or ſome public ſolemnity. But pray, Mademoiſelle, have you ever ſeen a certain old building cloſe by an immenſe rock, on the border of the ocean?"

"The rock I have undoubtedly ſeen," replied Charlotte; "but as for the building you mention, I cannot ſay I particularly recollect it."

"I thought as much," returned the Chanoineſſe. "It is true, it might eaſily have eſcaped your obſervation, from its ſituation in a thick and impervious grove of ancient wood, which nearly conceals it on all ſides; but independent of that circumſtance, no perſon is allowed to enter it without the ſpecial permiſſion of the Counteſs. Few or none are indulged with an interior view of it; but indeed the gayer inhabitants of the world would not probably wiſh to viſit it a ſecond time, for by all accounts it is a very gloomy place. Monſieur once, and only once came near it, and never afterwards could bear the idea of even walking that way again; but Monſieur has no great taſte either for ſolitary meditation, or the beauties of nature,

nature, and Madame, it is ſaid, is not ſorry for it. Many a one, nevertheleſs, wonders at her courage; for ſome hours are ſpent in this favourite retreat every day ſhe is able to leave her chamber; though the paths are ſo numerous and various which lead to it, that it is difficult to ſay whether ſhe always bends her ſteps that way, or not."

"Is there no other place of reſort in the neighbourhood," aſked Charlotte, "which ſhe may viſit?"

"None on that ſide of the rock," anſwered the Nun,—"none, except the remains of an ancient ſtructure, where in former times thoſe who were religiouſly inclined, repaired to pay their devotion to the tutelar Saint of Narbonne. Madame has had one of the moſt diſtant receſſes cleared out, and again put in order for that purpoſe."

"But why ſhould it require courage to retire there?" ſaid Mademoiſelle de Cordet; "in my opinion I ſee no neceſſity for any exertion of it."

"Why!!" repeated Madame Veronica, croſſing herſelf with great earneſtneſs, and lowering her voice as ſhe ſpoke—"Holy mother of God! don't you know why?"

"Not I, indeed," replied her gueſt with increaſing aſtoniſhment at the manner and words of the Chanoineſſe.

"And

"And you have then really never heard of the ſtrange things reported of that place? For my part," continued the Nun, whoſe volubility, once ſet a going, ſeemed to have no end, "for my part," added ſhe, ſpeaking with quickneſs, "I put no confidence in what I believe to be only legendary tales; but yet, Mademoiſelle, you know that is no proof of their non-exiſtence.—Heaven defend me from the ſin and preſumption of thinking myſelf infallible! for I do aſſure you it is poſitively averred for a fact."

Madame Veronica ſeemed ſo long in coming to what was *averred as a fact*; that Charlotte began to loſe patience, and almoſt deſpaired of her ſtory having an end; ſhe therefore entreated her to proceed without further preface or delay, otherwiſe her time would not much longer permit her to hear the concluſion of her intelligence.

The Chanoineſſe, after a few more circumlocutions and aſſeverations of freedom from ſuperſtition, condeſcended at length to inform her that the great extent of wood which they ſaw from the caſement, ſurrounded three ſides of that immenſe precipice called the rock of Narbonne; that the fourth ſide of this huge maſs ſerved as a boundary to the encroachments of the ocean, and was there, from its perpendicular height, ſuppoſed to be inacceſſible.

inacceſſible. In that quarter a ſingular circumſtance, not eaſily accounted for, had frequently occurred.—Mariners who have paſſed it at ſea in the night-time, affirm, that at ſuch ſeaſons muſic has been heard, and lights have been ſeen iſſuing from it in different directions: the latter were ſometimes ſtationary, and ſometimes obſerved gliding along, now diſappearing, and then emerging again to view. This ſtory has, it ſeems, been long in circulation, but of late obtained more credit than ever.

" What can occaſion theſe lights, or from whence they proceed, or how a *ſolid maſs of ſtone is capable of furniſhing ſuch a deception, I am totally at a loſs to determine. Some pretend to explain this phenomena one way, ſome another; while others, who arrogate to themſelves more knowledge than their neighbours on ſupernatural appearances, inſinuate that the ſpot is haunted by the ſpirits of bad people, who were thrown from the top of the rock when civil war formerly, as now, raged in the kingdom. No wonder then, Mademoiſelle, that the courage

* In ſuppoſing it ſolid, as in ſeveral other circumſtances relative to the rock and its vicinity, the good Nun is a little miſtaken, as will be ſeen hereafter.

of the Counteſs is often a ſubject of aſtoniſhment; for though many of the ſiſters, and myſelf among the reſt, have repeatedly mentioned the general reports I have noticed to you, yet ſhe continues to perſevere in her ſolitary walks to her favourite retirement: indeed, when we firſt expreſſed our fears on the occaſion, both Madame and the Lady Abbeſs ſeemed a little ſtartled; but, however, the warning has proved ineffectual."

"It is ſtrange," interrupted Charlotte, "that no attempt is made to inveſtigate the real cauſe of theſe rumours; can the rock neither be explored on the land nor ſea ſide?"

"No," anſwered the Nun, "on the latter I have already told you it is perfectly inacceſſible; and were the maſs of itſelf otherwiſe, ſo many ſharp rocky projections ſurround its baſis under the ſurface of the water, that to approach it by that quarter would be incompatible with every idea of ſafety. The land ſide is almoſt equally difficult of acceſs, from the ſmoothneſs of the ſtone, which is of a marble ſubſtance, and in moſt places perpendicular; in others, it is covered with thick and impenetrable underwood, intermixed with frightful chaſms, where the leaſt falſe ſtep would be fatal: it is nevertheleſs poſſible to reach a certain altitude with tolerable ſafety, from whence the proſpect is

ſaid

ſaid to be beautiful, but where no ſatisfaction can be obtained reſpecting the interior conſtruction of this uncouth ſtructure;—if you will follow me into the oratory on the left, you will ſee it to more advantage."

Charlotte did ſo, and was ſoon convinced of the juſt deſcription ſhe had received of this awful natural curioſity; there too, ſhe remarked that the precipice ſhe had formerly ſtood upon, was detached from the main body of the rock, and placed between it and the foreſt.

She now looked at her watch, and was aſtoniſhed to find ſhe had been nearly four hours from the Caſtle.

Madame Veronica, nevertheleſs, would not part with her till ſhe promiſed to renew her viſit on every favourable opportunity; and then, after largely expatiating again on the bleſſings of a monaſtic life, ſhe concluded the whole with—" Ah, Mademoiſelle! this is a bad world—permanent happineſs is only to be found in a Convent!!"

Charlotte, however, was of a different opinion. In times of public danger ſhe thought the moral duties of active life of much greater importance to her fellow-creatures, than dozing through exiſtence within the gloomy walls of a Convent.

Beſides,

Beſides, if religious ſecluſion was abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, what was to become of the immenſe multitude that endeavoured to work out their redemption at large?—Were they merely created by a merciful Providence to have a ſentence paſſed on them ſimilar to that of the immortal Frederic's* on the gentlemen of Neufchatel?—If not, why then quit the poſt aſſigned them by Nature, and refuſe to bear their ſhare of the good and evil alternately mixed in the portion allotted us by Heaven?

The mind of man is a chaos of inconſiſtencies, and human wiſdom is loſt in the maze of error when it attempts to inveſtigate the motives that impel it to action.

* A divine of Neufchatel, thinking that even the juſtice of the Almighty ought to have ſome bounds, and that therefore the pains of the damned could not be eternal, preached up a doctrine, which held out a hope that even the damned ſhould not be eternally damned. This greatly ſcandalized his auditors, and at laſt produced a ſerious tumult.—The cauſe and effect were laid before the King of Pruſſia, as Sovereign of Neufchatel, and his Majeſty, willing to prevent the like in future, wrote the following laconic order to the commandant—"*Que Meſſieurs de Neufchatel ſoient damnes eternellement!*"—This decree, which left the people of Neufchatel to be damned in their own way, reſtored peace to the city.

CHAP. VII.

"——————Deſtructive ſlaughter
"Shall rage around, and mar this beauteous proſpect;
"Paſs but an hour, which ſtands between the lives
"Of thouſands and eternity—what change
"Shall haſty death make in yon peaceful plains?"

ROWE.

WINDING down a path through the wood which the Chanoineſſe had directed her to take for the benefit of a new proſpect, Charlotte deeply muſed over the occurrences of the morning. The intelligence ſhe had received was of a ſtrange nature—not the idle rumours propagated to terrify vulgar credulity; for in ſpite of the good Nun's pretenſions to riſe above ſuperſtition, it was eaſy to ſee

ſee ſhe was not proof againſt the force of it: Mademoiſelle de Cordet therefore conſidered her accounts as merely the fabulous exaggerations of a weak or heated imagination; but what ſhe had ſaid reſpecting the Counteſs, ſeriouſly intereſted her. There was then, it appeared, really ſome painful myſtery in her fate with which the Abbeſs of this Convent was not unacquainted. Of a deſcription peculiarly diſtreſſing this myſtery muſt undoubtedly be, elſe why ſo cautious to conceal it—why ſo averſe to ſhare the conſolations of friendly communication?

To obtain the confidence of Madame de Narbonne had long been the firſt wiſh of Charlotte's heart. With that point now more than ever in view, ſhe determined to redouble her aſſiduity and attention on every poſſible opportunity that occurred.

She carefully, however, concealed the intelligence given her by Veronica, and reſolved not to mention a word of the receſs, nor the reports circulated about the rock of Narbonne; ſhe even appeared cautious of ſtriking into any of the walks leading that way, unleſs when permitted by the Counteſs to accompany her.

In one of thoſe rambles they were ſo much engaged in converſation as to have advanced

imperceptibly pretty near the receſs, without attending to the road they had taken. The Counteſs concluded her companion muſt have obſerved it. She ſtopped for a moment, as if conſidering how to proceed.—"This is but a gloomy path we have ſomehow or other been purſuing," ſaid ſhe; "I will not, my dear young friend, aſk you to do penance in it any longer; return to the Caſtle, if you pleaſe—I will join you by and by; at preſent I wiſh to be alone for a few minutes."—So ſaying, ſhe turned from her, and was ſoon, by a ſudden winding in the road, out of ſight.

"It is even ſo," ſighed Charlotte to herſelf, as her looks were fixed on the direction Madame de Narbonne had diſappeared in; "I find my favourite point is ſtill unattained; confidence is yet denied me; but I ſeem to be ſlowly advancing to it, for never before was I permitted to go this length with her."

Charlotte now frequently repaired to the Convent. On one of her accuſtomed viſits, ſhe found the Chanoineſſe and ſome of the younger Nuns aſſembled together; traces of tears were viſible on each countenance, and their ſimple, but wholeſome repaſt ſtood untaſted before them.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet enquired, with the voice of friendſhip, into the cauſe of this appearance.

Madame

Madame Veronica mournfully aroſe, and leading her to the window, bade her look yonder.—" Ah ſee," cried ſhe, " what a change ſince your laſt viſit!—Where is now the beautiful villa we formerly admired on the ſide of that diſtant hill? Where the little hamlet in the valley below, or the fine extent of yellow corn that lately waved its luxuriant heads, wet with the glittering dew-drops of the morning?—Alas! alas, Mademoiſelle! look yonder, and deplore with us the calamitous hand of civil war!—See—ah ſee what a change!!"

Charlotte looked, and, with an aching heart, ſaw the whole one indiſcriminate heap of ruins! The once magnificent villa unroofed, the windows and doors demoliſhed, and the walls diſcoloured with fire. The late peaceful hamlet beneath was ſtill enveloped in a black cloud of ſmoke, which continued riſing in thick and huge columns, awfully aſcending upwards, till it reached the tribunal of the accuſing angel, to whom it bore the laſt groans of thoſe it had contributed to deſtroy. The rich crops of corn, thoſe valuable productions of Nature and induſtry, were no longer viſible; the ſombre ſhade of deſtruction had taken place of its yellow ripening hue, devaſtation marked its ſteps in fiery characters, and the ſurrounding ſcene ſeemed on all ſides deſolate and deſerted.

"And where are now the wretched inhabitants of that once charming ſpot?" ſaid Charlotte, deeply ſighing, as ſhe turned from the horrid ſight.

"In the boſom of their Maker!" groaned the Chanoineſſe.—"Butchered under their own roofs in the unreſiſting and unconſcious moment of midnight oblivion!—one half-naked fugitive alone eſcaped to tell the tale of blood!—Such are the effects of internal conflicts, religious infidelity, and the exterminating councils of the ſanguinary Marat!"

The good Nuns continued to moralize, to weep, to pray, and deprecate the wrath of Heaven, which already, in imagination, they ſaw hanging over their own heads, till ſummoned to attend their duty in the chapel: Charlotte then tenderly bade them adieu, and with a heavy heart returned to Narbonne.

Before M. de Cordet concluded his viſit at Clermont, he had the ſatisfaction to obſerve that his daughter was at length, in ſome degree, become neceſſary to the happineſs and comfort of his old friend, Madame de Narbonne; with whom ſhe now ſpent much of her time, and frequently remained at the Caſtle for ſeveral weeks together. At this period ſhe had been longer there than uſual, and was upon the point of returning to Clermont in the

the carriage that waited for her, when ſhe heard the great bell at the principal gate ring with violence; and ſoon after M. de la Ville appeared croſſing the court to that quarter where the ſuit of apartments, more particularly occupied by the Counteſs, was ſituated, and of which Mademoiſelle de Cordet's dreſſing-room made one of the number.

He entered his wife's chamber without any apology for his abrupt intruſion, and briefly informed her that certain intelligence had arrived of Charette's army being in great force; that the rebellious Vendeans daily joined his ſtandard in numbers, and that the Convention, determined to extirpate them at once by a deciſive blow, expected all good Republicans would aſſiſt in effecting this purpoſe, by contributing the neceſſary articles requiſite for the ſupport and augmentation of the National Army, as far as their abilities enabled them. That agreeably to this view, he had been entruſted with the charge of raiſing a body of men, of which the ſpecified quantum was conſiderable, and of courſe the attendant expence muſt be large in proportion; that his honour was at ſtake for the proper completion of this ſcheme; and the honour of a true Frenchman, like him, was not to be ſullied, &c. &c. &c.

While haranguing in this manner, De la Ville aſſumed all the airs of a man of the firſt rate importance: a ſtranger would have taken him for the Preſident of the National Convention, or one, at leaſt, on whom the whole burden of public affairs had unexpectedly devolved.

At length he ceaſed ſpeaking for a few moments, but merely, it appeared, from want of breath to proceed.

While ſtrutting about the room, and ſurveying himſelf by intervals in the mirror, Madame de Narbonne raiſed her head, for the firſt time, from the table on which ſhe leant, and enquired, in a dejected tone of voice, to what his words tended, or of what conſequence this intelligence could poſſibly be to her?

"Conſequence!" repeated he, "of the greateſt imaginable, to be ſure! The nation has honoured me with a high command; I muſt have the means to ſupport it; you can ſupply me with that; ſhew your gratitude then, for, truſt me, Madame, you might have fallen into worſe hands than mine, I believe."

"Gratitude!—Ah me!" exclaimed the Counteſs, with a wild look of deſpair caſt to heaven, and her hands claſped as ſhe ſpoke.

"Yes,

"Yes, gratitude!" retorted he, with a provoking ſmile full of malice. "But come, Madame, I have no leiſure to beſtow on idle recrimination: Auſtin Marat avers I am ſtill ignorant of half my wealth; he pretends to know that the family jewels and plate, belonging to the Houſe of Narbonne, are much more valuable than I am yet acquainted with. The preſent time is not calculated for endeavouring to obtain what ought to be one's own, by the ſlow operation of an Engliſh chancery ſuit:—we legiſlators," and he looked ſome inches taller as he ſpoke—"we legiſlators of France execute juſtice in a more ſummary manner; the guillotine has the method of ſupplying reſources at an inſtant's warning; even holy ſaints of ſilver memory are not exempted, but do penance in the mint for thoſe acts of ſuperſtition they have formerly witneſſed; terror is now the ſyſtem, and requiſition the word. Your keys then, Madame, without further ceremony."

The Counteſs ſilently obeyed, and laid them on the table without once raiſing her eyes as they were delivered.

He ſnatched them up, ordered her to ſhew him where her jewels were depoſited, and ſeizing a caſket, of which the contents appeared to be heavy, retired to make the ſame demand for the plate from

the houſe ſteward, juſt as Charlotte appeared at the door to bid the Counteſs farewel.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet had ſomehow or other acquired an aſcendency over the mind of De la Ville, which he knew not very well how to account for. The ſame reaſon which the Marchioneſs D'Ancre* aſſigned for her influence with her Royal miſtreſs, might indeed have partly explained its original cauſe; but too much modeſty was not the fault of De la Ville, and therefore he did not think it neceſſary to give a ſimilar definition of his feelings.

Some ſmall remains of conſcience, however, now whiſpered a mental reprimand, and Charlotte's looks ſeemed to ſay ſhe knew it was merited. The ſelf-created legiſlator of France ſunk into his natural inſignificancy before her, and bowing low, paſſed her with anxious ſolicitude to conceal the legal robbery he had committed, for ſupporting the honour of himſelf and the National Convention!

Madame de Narbonne ſighed deeply.

* The Marchioneſs D'Ancre, when accuſed of uſing witchcraft to the injury of the Queen, anſwered, that her ſole art conſiſted in the influence which ſuperior minds naturally acquire over weak ones.

"Alas!"

"Alas!" ſaid Charlotte, gazing upon her with affectionate tenderneſs—"alas! ſome new calamity afflicts you;—can I not aſſiſt in alleviating its force?—At leaſt, Madame, let me make the effort; diſcloſe your griefs, I entreat you; permit me, for heaven's ſake, to participate in them?—I truſt you will not, on trial, have cauſe to think your confidence miſplaced; Oh then, Madame! refuſe no longer to repoſe your diſtreſſes on the faithful boſom of unalterable friendſhip, but allow me to ſhare them, I beſeech you."

The energetic manner in which this requeſt was urged, rouſed the Counteſs from the heavy ſtupor of grief which ſeemed to have ſeized on her ſenſes. She raiſed her languid, but now tearleſs eyes to thoſe of her young comforter, and there met every indication of ſincerity and benevolence that the human countenance is capable of exhibiting. Struck with the expreſſion her fine features conveyed, ſhe fixed them for a moment on her face, and then, on Charlotte once more repeating her requeſt, burſt into a flood of tears.

"No, my dear girl," ſaid ſhe, in a faint and low accent, "I do not, I cannot doubt your generous friendſhip and ſenſibility!—Nothing new has occurred; only the old ſtory—unprovoked inſult on one ſide, and irremediable ſuffering on the other!

—the ill-ſorted ſucceſſor of my noble anceſtors ——— But it ſignifies not entering into particulars. I have been forced to part with ſome valuable jewels for the worſt of cauſes—the dreadful purpoſe of deluging France in gore, and aſſiſting it to wade ſtill farther in the blood of its devoted Nobility!—No matter—all will be well in time!"

"But for Heaven's ſake, on what particular pretence was this abominable outrage now committed?" ſaid Charlotte, while her eyes beamed with indignant paſſion.

"Charette is reported to be making great efforts," replied Madame de Narbonne. "But this ſtory has been ſo often affirmed as a plauſible pretext for extortion, that I am ignorant what portion of credit is at preſent due to it. The caſket, of which I have been deprived, was, however, intended for a different deſtination.—Luckily it had not reached it; I ſay luckily, for had there been nothing to ſatisfy the graſping hand of rapacity, I know not to what degree of brutality I might have been ſubjected; henceforth I muſt take care to be better prepared for ſimilar demands."

Gratified by this explanation, and the confidence now repoſed in her, Charlotte relinquiſhed the recent deſign of returning to Clermont, and determined to remain with Madame de Narbonne till De la Ville once more left the Caſtle.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

" The poets that firſt feign'd a god of war,
" Sure propheſy'd of thee!"

ROWE.

. . . . . .

——" I obſerv'd him,
" And ever as I gaz'd, ſome nameleſs charm,
" A wondrous greatneſs, not to be conceal'd,
" Broke thro' his form, and aw'd my ſoul before him."

BROOKE.

ELATED with ſucceſs, and weakly eager to boaſt of the management that had procured ſuch an increaſe of riches, De la Ville ſpent the remainder of his time at the Caſtle in turbulent mirth with a few of his uſual aſſociates; and on the following

following morning departed from Narbonne in order to commence, what he ſtyled, his military operations with ſuperior *eclat*.

On the evening of the ſame day Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſet out on her return to Clermont.

It was late when ſhe parted with the Counteſs, and the ſober tints of twilight were faſt receding before the darker ſhades of night. Her attendants had not been long in the ſervice of their maſter, and were unacquainted with the various paths that wound through the gloomy and extenſive foreſt on which they were entering. Apprehenſive of loſing their way, they applied to Charlotte for directions, and ſhe pointed out what ſhe thought was a nearer and ſafer road than that which they uſually travelled.

The poſtillion laſhed his horſes, and flew on with rapidity; and a conſiderable ſpace was already paſſed, before either Charlotte or her attendants diſcovered they were purſuing a very different courſe from what they intended.

In a more open part of the country there was ſtill ſufficient light to have guided their ſteps; but it was now become too feeble to pierce through the impervious ſhades of the foreſt, and the moon had not yet aſcended high enough to render them any aſſiſtance. In this ſituation diſcrimination was impoſſible,

impoſſible, and therefore to proceed, dangerous. To remain, however, was no leſs ſo; for the numerous hordes of banditti, which were known to infeſt the neighbourhood, were not the conductors they wiſhed for. A conſultation was conſequently called, and it was agreed to purſue the route they had taken, till they reached an opening in the foreſt, which might either enable them to rectify their miſtake, or continue their progreſs with more ſafety.

Human wiſdom, in ſpite of all its boaſted capabilities, has frequently been diſappointed in the means employed for the accompliſhment of its wiſhes:—Solomon himſelf felt this fact from experience, and M. de Clermont's poſtillion was not an example of the contrary.

The poor fellow, it is true, did not appear to be the very firſt of all poſſible heroes, but he was nevertheleſs a tolerable philoſopher. As the imaginary ſteps of the banditti perpetually aſſailed his ears, he could not help reflecting that the ſlow and cautious pace he obſerved, might ſubject them to be overtaken, in which caſe any preſent care or attention would afterwards prove but a very inadequate compenſation for the probable loſs of his life in another manner.

This

This idea gave additional force to the practical efforts of an enormous length of whip, which, from its frequent and powerful application, obliged the horſes to proceed with a dangerous degree of velocity, till the bloody laſh of the uplifted implement, that impelled them forward, accidentally caught hold of a paſſing branch, and its maſter found himſelf under the neceſſity of ſtopping to diſentangle it.

Charlotte de Cordet was not one of thoſe very conſiderate ladies, who think it abſolutely requiſite to faint or ſcream on every unavoidable emergency, merely for the honour of their ſenſibility; ſhe calmly enquired what had happened, and then waited with patience till it was remedied.

As the fellow, in trembling haſte, leant on the ſide of his ſeat for that purpoſe, and with heartfelt ſincerity was giving every tree in the foreſt to the Devil, ſtartled by ſomething of a bright appearance, which ſuddenly flaſhed in their eyes, the horſes ſprung forward, threw the poſtillion to a diſtance, and ſet off at a furious rate through the wood.

They had not, however, proceeded far at this pace till they encountered the trunk of an old tree that lay acroſs the path they had taken; and the carriage was upon the point of being inevitably overturned

overturned on the edge of a precipice, when a gentleman, with infinite courage and dexterity, leaped from the oppoſite ſide of the road, and caught them by the bridle juſt as they were on the very brink of final deſtruction.

A number of armed men now came ruſhing up to Charlotte's deliverer, one of whom exclaimed, as he approached—" Well done, St. Julian! you are a noble fellow, and always engaged in the cauſe of humanity or honour!"

He, who was thus addreſſed by the appellation of St. Julian, only anſwered with a bow; and requeſting ſome of the party to aſſiſt in holding the horſes, advanced to the door of the coach, where he anxiouſly enquired after the fate of her who occupied it. No voice, however, was heard in return!—This circumſtance appeared alarming; and he ſnatched a lantern from one of the people neareſt him, to examine the interior of the carriage.

This intention was no ſooner put in practice, than Charlotte was diſcovered lying at the bottom of the machine, her head leaning againſt the ſeat, bloody, and apparently lifeleſs!

The energetic exclamation this occaſioned, inſtantly brought the commanding Officer (for this proved to be a party of the Royaliſts on their way to join Charette's army) to the ſame ſide of the

carriage

carriage, and their united endeavours to recal her ſenſes were not long ineffectual. The ſucceſs of their attempts to revive her was no ſooner perceived by the ſenior Officer, and her recovery pronounced probable, than he quitted the coach, ſaying, as he haſtily deſcended—" A further delay may be of dangerous conſequence to us; our orders require diſpatch. I will proceed with the party to its deſtination; do you, St. Julian, get the lady conveyed to the cottage in the grove of pines. I will leave Jacques and Rouſillon to aſſiſt you: when ſhe is able to ſpeak, you will learn what orders are neceſſary to be given, and where ſhe wiſhes to be removed.—Meanwhile loſe no time, but join us at the appointed rendezvous with your uſual celerity."

As the band filed off, their ſhining arms gleamed on the face of Charlotte, whoſe eyes now languidly opened for the firſt time. A faint trace of recollection recalled the ſimilarity of this appearance with that which had ſo recently cauſed her preſent condition, by frightening the horſes; ſhe uttered a feeble ſcream, accompanied by ſome incoherent words, and was again ſinking on the ſeat of the carriage, when St. Julian, who had been leaning forwards, liſtening to the directions of his commander, and was then giving ſome orders to the two men who remained, haſtily turned round, and caught

caught her in his arms before ſhe could reach the bottom. A council of war was now held on the ſubject of their future movements, and it was agreed to proceed immediately to the cottage; but this reſolution could not be accompliſhed till the damaged harneſs had undergone ſome neceſſary repairs, which Jacques undertook to perform in ſuch a manner as the preſent circumſtances would admit of. Rouſillon remained with the horſes, and St. Julian attended to the ſituation of his fair charge; till the former pronounced it as his opinion that they might proceed with a decent proſpect of ſafety. From the roughneſs of the road, and the ſtill unavoidable ſhattered ſtate of the equipage, it was judged expedient, however, to walk at the head of the horſes, and the two aſſiſtants accordingly took that poſt upon themſelves.

In this manner they reached the cottage, without meeting with any further moleſtation or impediment.

Rouſillon knocked at the door; but no anſwer was returned. He next had recourſe to a ſmall aperture, dignified with the name of a caſement, through which he announced the watch-word. The peaſant was already aſleep, but his wife had not yet retired to reſt: ſhe inſtantly recognized the voice of Rouſillon, and admitted them.

The

The only comfortable bed in the hut was occupied by the maſter of it; but the circumſtances of the caſe were no ſooner made known to him, than he inſiſted on reſigning it to the lady. It was ſituated in a little back chamber, where Charlotte was conveyed, and placed upon it.

In one corner of the room, where the reſt of the family were aſſembled, ſtood a kind of old-faſhioned bench, which ſerved as a temporary couch to repoſe upon on any unuſual emergency. This the hoſpitable owners immediately put in order, and entreated St. Julian would take poſſeſſion of it; but though Rouſillon informed them that he had not been in bed during either of the two preceding nights, their importunities were ineffectual; he determined to keep watch within hearing of his fair patient, and ſtationed himſelf at her door accordingly.

The moon had begun to appear about the time that the accident happened to the carriage; it now ſhone forth in all its ſplendour. Rouſillon and Jacques were attending to the horſes in an outer ſhed at the end of the cottage, and the peaſant was employed in ſearching the bottom of the coach for a ſmelling bottle of Charlotte's, which St. Julian had requeſted him to look for, when all at once he exclaimed—"I know the owner of this carriage; theſe

theſe arms belong to M. de Clermont. I was cutting wood on the other ſide of the foreſt when it paſſed this morning, and the ſervants applied to me for directions to Narbonne. They had never, it ſeems, travelled in this quarter of the country before."

"And who, pray, is this M. de Clermont?" ſaid St. Julian, whom the peaſant's exclamation had drawn to the door.

"He is a very worthy gentleman, Monſieur," replied the other, "and ſuſpected to be a favourer of monarchy; but in theſe troubleſome times it behoves people to be cautious, ſo M. de Clermont ſays little, and keeps his opinions pretty much to himſelf: he lives not a great way from this, on the eaſt ſide of the foreſt."

"If M. de Clermont is a favourer of monarchy," ſaid Rouſillon, "how comes it that he carries on any intercourſe with a man of De la Ville's deſcription, whoſe well-known republican principles, rapacious, yet profuſe diſpoſition, weak head, and verſatile temper are no ſecrets, nor any way ſuitable to the ideas of good men privately attached to our cauſe?"

"Alas!" replied the cottager, "I have already ſaid that caution is neceſſary, and may at preſent be of more ſervice than an oppoſite conduct; beſides, theſe

theſe gentlemen are neighbours; M. de Clermont has but lately ſettled in this province, and is perhaps unwilling to riſk the tranquillity of his family among ſtrangers, by coming to any needleſs or open rupture with M. de la Ville: for he cannot be ignorant that the Lord of Narbonne maintains a band of diſſipated aſſociates, who under the influence of the younger Marat, and the ſanction of Conventional orders, are ever ready to ravage and deſtroy where inclination or revenge rear their ſtandard.—Ah why—why did the Counteſs diſgrace herſelf, and oppreſs her once happy dependants, by giving that man the title of huſband?—But come," added he, turning round, and addreſſing himſelf to Jacques, "let us return to the ſpot where you firſt diſcovered the lady; there was a ſervant with the carriage beſides the poſtillion; we muſt endeavour to find what is become of theſe poor fellows, if poſſible."

"You are right, my friend;—yes, certainly you are right," ſaid St. Julian, with the air of a man whoſe thoughts were employed on another ſubject.—Then recollecting himſelf, he deſired Jacques to accompany their hoſt, and if the ſervants were found, conduct them back to the cottage; after which he returned to his former poſition at Charlotte's door.

Rouſillon, who though not in a menial ſtation, was yet inferior in military rank to St. Julian, preferred a ſeat at the door of their habitation to any other place; and the miſtreſs of the cottage remained with Charlotte.

This diſtribution of the parties left St. Julian alone. Overcome with fatigue and want of reſt, he leant his head againſt the mud wall of the cottage, and croſſing his arms, endeavoured to keep himſelf awake by dwelling on the diſcourſe of the peaſant, whoſe account of De la Ville, and apoſtrophe to the Counteſs on her ill-ſorted marriage, particularly intereſted him; nor could he give any ſatisfactory reaſon for the unconquerable inclination he felt to obtain further intelligence on the ſubject. This gratification he hoped to procure before his departure; and at length, totally wearied out with mental, as well as corporeal exertions, he inſenſibly dropped into a ſort of ſlumber.

In this temporary ſuſpenſion of thought he had not long continued, when it was interrupted by the faint ſound of voices, and the lifting of a latch cloſe at his head; immediately after which, the door of Charlotte's little apartment opened, and he ſaw her appear, leaning on her hoſteſs.

Starting from the bench, he ſoftly ſeized one of her hands, and throwing his right arm round her waiſt,

waiſt, entreated ſhe would permit him to ſupport her acroſs the floor.—In the meantime, the good woman was buſtling about to make ſomething like a cuſhion for the only ſemblance of a chair in her poſſeſſion, which, having flattered herſelf ſhe had accompliſhed, (though, in truth, it could ſcarcely come under that denomination), St. Julian gently placed his fair charge upon it, and, inſtead of ſeating himſelf, remained ſtanding near her in a penſive, but graceful poſture, with his eyes rivetted on her countenance, as if fearful to fatigue her with queſtions, though anxious to learn her preſent ſituation.

That was now become more favourable than could well have been expected in the time. Conſiderably recruited by the ſhort but refreſhing repoſe ſhe had happily enjoyed, Charlotte felt no other inconvenience from her late accident except a great degree of laſſitude, which ſtill hung about her, and was a natural conſequence of what ſhe had ſuffered. The blood had been waſhed from her face on their firſt arrival, and the wound on her temple was unattended with any alarming ſymptom: a very indiſtinct idea nevertheleſs remained of the cauſe that had produced all theſe effects, and placed her in the cottage. This, however, on her firſt awaking, was partly explained by the peaſant's wife:

wife: afterwards wiſhing for a freer circulation of air, and ſolicitous to thank her preſerver, ſhe inſiſted upon riſing, and joining him for that purpoſe.

The exertion this deſign occaſioned, almoſt proved too much for her preſent weak ſtate, and ſhe ſat for ſome moments ſilently leaning on the arm of the chair in which St. Julian had ſeated her.

Hitherto ſhe paid little or no attention to the perſon whoſe ſupporting arm had been tendered her. From the reſpect ſhewn him by the woman of the cottage, ſhe now firſt recollected he muſt be her deliverer; and the inſtant ſhe was able to ſpeak, raiſed her head to addreſs him. Aſtoniſhment, however, then ſeized every faculty, and deprived her a ſecond time of articulation.

The graceful figure that thus attracted notice, appeared to her view more than mortal. His tall and commanding form was proportioned with the niceſt ſymmetry. A martial air, which beſpoke the man of faſhion and the gentleman, open, bold, and noble, was meliorated by the moſt prepoſſeſſing ſoftneſs of manner and deportment; while intellectual refinement and intelligence beamed in his animated black ſparkling eyes, and ſpread the inſinuating influence of a poliſhed mind over every expreſſive feature. His years did not ſeem to exceed eighteen or twenty at moſt,—"truth might lie between;"

and the idea of elegance perſonified, occurred the moment you looked at him.—Such was the youthful St. Julian, as Mademoiſelle de Cordet in mute admiration beheld him.

He was not, however, entirely indebted for her approbation to the ſuperior recommendation Nature and education had beſtowed on him; ſomething ſtill more intereſting operated in his favour with Charlotte—a reſemblance to Madame de Narbonne forcibly ſtruck her; the ſame ivory teeth, the ſame faſcinating ſmile, the ſame, at times, penſive caſt of countenance, a thouſand nameleſs ſimilitudes ſhewn forth in every different attitude, and her cheeks were ſuffuſed with bluſhes when ſhe remarked the attention her fixed obſervation had drawn upon her.

Apprehenſive that her looks and evident emotion might ſuffer a wrong interpretation, ſhe felt the latter increaſe to a painful degree, and made an effort to diſguiſe her ſenſations by once more attempting to expreſs her gratitude for the very eſſential ſervice he had lately rendered her.

St. Julian had nothing of the coxcomb in his diſpoſition; he did not imagine every woman in love with him who appeared agitated or unhappy in his company; he feared ſhe was ill again, and entreated to know what could be done for her relief.

Charlotte

Charlotte felt the delicacy of her ſituation increaſing; and with one of thoſe efforts, which in particular caſes exquiſite ſenſibility is ſometimes productive of, ſhe determined to ſuppreſs ideas ſo chimerical, and endeavour to acquit herſelf with more propriety.

Requeſting a glaſs of water, ſhe drank it haſtily; and in anſwer to his queſtion reſpecting her health, proceeded to aſſure him ſhe was infinitely better; but ſaid, ſhe could only account for her laſt agitation (which he muſt have obſerved had another motive for its cauſe than the late accident) by candidly confeſſing the truth, which originated in a very remarkable reſemblance he bore to a particular friend of her's; and then mentioning Madame de Narbonne, begged he would have the goodneſs to ſatisfy her curioſity, by informing her if any tie of relationſhip or acquaintance ſubſiſted between them.

St. Julian's ſmile, and the bow that accompanied it, were the ſmile and bow of a man to whom the preſent queſtion was not new.—He replied that the ſame idea had occurred to many people, and the ſame interrogatories followed; but, deeply ſighing, added, with a penſive and melancholy air, that he was not ſo fortunate as to be related to the

Counteſs de Narbonne, nor indeed to come within the circle of her knowledge.

The tone of his voice as he pronounced theſe words, his whole appearance and look, convinced Charlotte ſhe had unconſciouſly touched a ſtring that grated on his feelings; therefore, after gazing on him for a moment in ſilence, ſhe turned the converſation into another channel, and recurred to the obligations he had ſo recently laid her under.

On this ſubject ſhe expatiated with all that warmth of gratitude which generous minds are ſuſceptible of; and St. Julian found his attempts ineffectual to prevent her from pouring out the effuſions of her heart on the occaſion.

At length a ſoft rap at the door announced the arrival of Jacques and his hoſt.

The poſtillion accompanied them; but it was with ſome difficulty he was able to reach the cottage.

When thrown from the horſes, his head had ſtruck againſt a tree, and the effects of the blow though temporary, were ſo violent as to leave him in a ſtate of inſenſibility; he was therefore ignorant which way the unruly animals had carried the coach, or what afterwards happened to it. Unfortunately, the horſe that the other ſervant rode, became lame prior to the accident taking place; this

this circumſtance occaſioned his being left conſiderably behind at the time, and he was ſoon completely diſtanced by a ſtone getting into the ſame foot, which incapacitated him totally from proceeding till he diſmounted to remove it. Before this could be accompliſhed, the poſtillion had drove with too much velocity to be eaſily overtaken in his preſent ſituation; and the horſes, when deprived of their rider, going on at a ſtill more furious pace, he was ignorant of the whole affair till the groans of the half-revived poſtillion attracted his attention. They now held a council which way to conduct themſelves in purſuit of the carriage; of this, however, the former could not give the ſmalleſt intimation, and conſequently they knew not where to bend their courſe. A conſiderable period had elapſed ſince the poſtillion loſt ſight of it: he had long lain inſenſible; and the other man, plagued with a lame horſe, having again bewildered himſelf in the gloomy intricacies of the foreſt, had ſpent much time before he was even ſo lucky as to ſtumble on his nearly diſabled companion.

At length they agreed to take different roads in ſearch of the fugitives. The idea of the once formidable banditti had given way to anxiety for the fate of his horſes; and the poſtillion no longer thought of any thing elſe, except when a vague

recollection of the inſide paſſenger occurred;—but for her he entertained few apprehenſions, provided his horſes were ſafe; he conceived not any thing elſe of equal conſequence, and never once ſuppoſed the interior could ſuffer if the outſide eſcaped unhurt.

This axiom he, however, ſoon found to be experimentally wrong.

He had not proceeded far in his purſuit, before a blow, received on his leg from one of the horſes, became ſo troubleſome, that he was forced to relinquiſh his deſign. The reluctance that accompanied this caſe of neceſſity, and the impatient expreſſions it drew from him, convinced him to his coſt, that the corporeal agony he now ſuffered, was at leaſt equal to the mental one occaſioned by the loſs of his horſes: and ſelf-taught by his own feelings, he began to beſtow ſome compaſſion on the fate of poor Charlotte, as he reflected upon her ſituation, ſo much worſe, in all human probability, than what even he himſelf endured.

In this painful and diſcontented ſtate he ſtretched himſelf on the ground, under the ſhelter of a large tree, and with anxious ſolicitude awaited the chance of diſcovery and aſſiſtance. His expectations were happily anſwered; and ſuch methods purſued with the bruiſed limb, that he no longer doubted his

his ability to conduct the carriage in ſafety to Clermont, provided the peaſant would ſerve as his guide through the foreſt. This matter being ſettled to his wiſh, he repaired to the wretched hovel where his horſes had been placed.

Rouſillon, who had latterly ſlipped into the coach, and fallen aſleep there, was now awakened, and every thing put in motion for their departure.

Theſe preparations were not viewed with indifference by the principal perſons concerned in them; the converſation that had taken place between Charlotte and St. Julian, though without one ſingle particle of love in its compoſition, had already diſcovered to each a ſimilarity of ſentiment and diſpoſition, ſufficient to lay the foundation of a future and permanent friendſhip, which even the contrariety of opinion entertained on political ſubjects, might not perhaps have the power to diſſolve.

This circumſtance is the leſs to be wondered at, when it is remembered that liberal minds ever poſſeſs congenial ideas on any great or momentous occaſion, and uſually purſue the ſame means to enſure ſucceſs.

Beſides, Charlotte conſidered St. Julian as her preſerver from certain deſtruction; and gratitude in a character like her's, is ſometimes productive

of too impulſive and generous a ſenſation, to admit of nice diſcriminations on its firſt entrance to the boſom.

Whether the obligation was conferred by an old or a new acquaintance, made little difference, in her opinion, as to its intrinſic value; or if the ſcale preponderated, it was in favour of the latter, who, as an utter ſtranger, had not the ſame cauſe for exertion in her behalf, as might naturally be expected from thoſe to whom ſhe was not entirely unknown.

It is not uncommon to feel intereſted for thoſe we are conſcious of having materially benefited: a conſequent degree of complacency diffuſes itſelf over every look and action, and St. Julian now fully experienced this to be the caſe.

With hearts ſo open to firſt impreſſions of eſteem and gratitude, it is not ſurpriſing that theſe two young people ſhould be mutually pleaſed with each other's company, or that upwards of two hours glided away without perceiving the lapſe of time as it paſſed.

"But is it, ſeriouſly, poſſible that two characters, ſuch as you have juſt deſcribed, could ſpend ſo many hours together, in a cottage too, without falling deſperately in love with each other?—What an unlikely ſtory!" exclaims a whole coterie of modern Novel readers.

Yes,

Yes, my good ladies!—yes, it is poſſible; becauſe in the preſent inſtance it certainly happened. Many good reaſons might perhaps be aſſigned for this ſeeming incongruity, were we permitted to examine the chapter of futurity:—one only, however, I am now at liberty to diſcloſe; neither Charlotte nor her companion were learned in the rules of a circulating library!

Though free from romantic partiality, or prejudice, one circumſtance nevertheleſs pained them as the time of ſeparation approached.

The leaders of their different parties were not all celebrated for liberality of ſentiment, or a generous mode of thinking; hence any intercourſe they might wiſh to maintain hereafter, would probably have a ſuſpicious appearance, and ſubject them to diſagreeable imputations;—this therefore might prove the only interview they would ever be able to obtain; the reflection was diſtreſſing, and St. Julian became peculiarly dejected.

To protract the hour of departure was all he could do; and he contrived to accompliſh this manœuvre by repeating ſeveral queſtions, already anſwered, reſpecting the Counteſs de Narbonne. The ſolicitude with which he apparently mentioned this ſubject, ſeemed to increaſe in proportion as the probability of renewing it gradually vaniſhed.

It ſurpriſed both himſelf and Charlotte; and the enigma could only be ſolved by the ſuppoſition that his curioſity aroſe from the reſemblance exiſting between them, which might naturally create a deſire to obtain ſome particular knowledge of her, and her more immediate concerns.

After handing her to the carriage, St. Julian, gracefully bowing, retired a few ſteps to conceal his emotion.

Charlotte perceived the cauſe of this ſilent movement, and aſſumed a look of cheerfulneſs which the humidity of her eyes but ill ſeconded.

That the heart of St. Julian appeared good, his underſtanding ſuperior, and his mind and manners elegantly accompliſhed, were matters of infinite conſequence to be aſſured of. Theſe facts ſhe had endeavoured to aſcertain as far as circumſtances would permit.

As for *his name*, it neither made him better nor worſe, and ſhe had therefore totally neglected to enquire for it! At the moment of ſeparation, however, it naturally occurred that information on this head might hereafter prove neceſſary, and ſhe inſtantly determined to obtain it.

"*A-propos*, Monſieur," looking after him from the coach window as ſhe ſpoke—"*a-propos*, Monſieur," ſaid ſhe, "one piece of knowledge is yet

yet unattained, which I ſhould be ſorry to remain ignorant of: may I aſk by what appellation my deliverer is to be remembered in my daily oriſons—he who, next to Heaven, is the prolonger of my earthly exiſtence!"

St. Julian informed her of what the reader is already acquainted with, and then added—"We have lately been on a reconnoitering party in the vicinity of this foreſt, and were returning to join the main body of the Royal army, when I had the good fortune to render you ſome aſſiſtance. My ſituation in that army is not an inferior one; but every connection with it precludes all hopes of a future intercourſe. Pardon my preſumption; I confeſs an unconquerable reluctance to part with you, and ſigh to think that ſuch a man as De la Ville —— But no matter;—farewel! in all human probability this is the laſt, the very laſt time we can ever meet with propriety, even in the character that common acquaintance warrants!"

"Adieu, M. de St. Julian!" faltered Charlotte, as ſhe haſtily withdrew from the window of the carriage—"adieu! my obligations can never be obliterated from remembrance;—all happineſs attend you!"

The crack of the poſtillion's whip reverberated on the heart of St. Julian, while he ſtood fixed at

the threſhold of the cottage, penſively liſtening to the ſound of the wheels as it gradually died away at a diſtance.

"It is neceſſary," ſaid Rouſillon, "to continue our march; I know a ſhort cut through the foreſt, which may yet perhaps enable us to overtake Colonel D'Albert, provided he paſſed the night at the appointed reſting-place; but expedition is requiſite; we have no further time to loſe. *Ah parbleu!* what have we here?—Something doubtleſſly dropped by the lady when ſhe took her handkerchief from her pocket."

St. Julian looked over his ſhoulder, and enquired the cauſe of Rouſillon's ſudden exclamation.

"This parcel," ſaid the latter, approaching with a bow, "belongs, I preſume, to the lady: be pleaſed, Monſieur, to take charge of it; the contents may be of conſequence."

The outer cover was looſely wrapped round it. St. Julian took it off to look for a direction, but found none; the interior paper was unſealed, and after a moment's heſitation he ventured to open it alſo.

A ſmall gold caſe preſented itſelf to view. St. Julian preſſed the ſpring—it yielded to his finger; he glanced his eyes upon its contents, and, convulſively ſtarting, dropped it from his hand.

Thoſe who were preſent remarked his agitation with aſtoniſhment; but heedleſs of obſervation, he inſtantly ſnatched up the object that occaſioned it, applied it to his lips—to his heart, and for ſome moments gazed upon it with inconceivable rapture; then addreſſing at intervals the inanimate picture, as if it underſtood his broken and incoherent expreſſions, he ſeemed to be ſolely abſorbed in the feelings this diſcovery had given birth to.

"It is even ſo!" cries a member of the aforeſaid Novel-reading coterie, ſignificantly nodding her head; "yes, I formerly ſurmiſed as much; I knew this interview would end in a love ſtory at laſt."

You are miſtaken, however, my good lady; Mademoiſelle de Cordet and St. Julian entertained no ſuch ſentiment for each other:—if the latter had another perſon in view, that is his affair, not mine; I therefore leave you to comment on the fallacy of natural appearances, and return to the thread of my narrative.

New life ſeemed now to be reſtored to St. Julian. From this time he aſſumed a different look; and the melancholy ſhade which often clouded his manly countenance, no longer overſpread it. He retired to the ſmall apartment within the cottage; and in half an hour after rejoined his companions with an air

air of interior ſatisfaction that evinced the occurrence of ſome agreeable incident.

" Come along, my lads!" he exclaimed, while buckling on his ſword, and gracefully replacing the martial cap with its waving ornaments, on his fine poliſhed forehead; " let us haſten to join our brave commander; his ſteps lead to honour and glory, and our's, I truſt, will not lag behind! Come then, my friends—our's is no common cauſe!"

The peaſant and his wife followed them a few ſteps with a thouſand bleſſings. Neither Charlotte nor St. Julian had left them any cauſe to complain of their liberality.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

" So when of old, Sicilian ſhores along,
" Enchanting Syrens thrill'd th' alluring ſong,
" Bound to the maſt, the charm'd Ulyſſes hears,
" And drinks the ſweet notes with inſatiate ears."

MISS SEWARD.

WHILE theſe tranſactions were paſſing in the foreſt, all was confuſion and uproar at Clermont. The ſervant who had attended the carriage on horſeback, unable to procure any tidings of its deſtination, and hopeful, as his laſt conſolation, that the horſes might probably find their way home, had himſelf repaired thither after a weary and fruitleſs ſearch of ſome hours.

Nothing,

Nothing, however, appeared to confirm this vague expectation at Clermont. Neither coach nor horſes had yet arrived there; and the ſervant's incoherent account of the accident was the firſt intelligence received of it.

Dreadful apprehenſions conſequently aroſe for the fate of Mademoiſelle de Cordet, and every one flew a different way in queſt of her.

M. de Clermont alſo mounted one of his fleeteſt courſers in ſilence, and inſtantly ſet off on the ſame purſuit. Though ſecretly agitated with the diſtreſſing idea of ſome almoſt certain and melancholy cataſtrophe, he wiſely forbore to increaſe the general alarm, which any unuſual emotion viſible in a ſuperior is commonly productive of.

About a mile from Clermont the diſtant ſound of a carriage reached him. Undetermined whether to return or meet it, he ſtopped his horſe, and ſtood for a moment in fearful ſuſpenſe.

Charlotte daſhed to pieces within the ſhattered vehicle, and the unruly animals dragging it along as chance directed, without their rider, preſented itſelf inceſſantly to his tortured imagination, till a ſudden turn in the road brought inſtantaneous relief by affording a tranſient glimpſe of the coachman.

M. de

M. de Clermont immediately ſet ſpurs to his horſe, and was up with them in a minute.

Charlotte's return, and return in ſafety, was doubly acceptable; innumerable congratulations met her on all ſides, and tranquillity was once more reſtored to the peaceful inhabitants of Clermont.

We muſt, however, except one perſon from this otherwiſe general rule.

Madame de Clermont had not been in the beſt of all poſſible humours ſince the preceding evening.

Two tall, handſome looking daughters were juſt arrived from a Convent at Florence; and Madame de Clermont was not yet old enough to be particularly fond of tall, handſome looking daughters.

Though naturally not of a malicious diſpoſition, ſhe was eaſily put out of temper; "trifles, light as air," could effect this at any time, and on ſuch occaſions ſhe had not the ſmalleſt notion of ſelf-command.

This deficiency, on the ſcore of patience, was in ſome degree remedied by the preſence of M. de Clermont, who commonly had influence ſufficient to reſtrain that copious flood of invective and complaint, which was frequently in danger of inundating her auditors in his abſence.

The

The dread of a retort, *not courteous*, was ſeldom felt at the moment of paſſion; and from Charlotte ſhe had ſcarcely ever laid herſelf open to the chance of it. But though prevented by M. de Clermont from exerciſing her abilities with the freedom ſhe wiſhed (that is to ſay, with as little reſtraint as poſſible), ſhe had yet a peculiar art of conveying mortifying hints in a civil manner, and this morning every one near her was attacked either publicly, or by inſinuation, as circumſtances beſt ſuited at the time.

"You are warm, Charlotte, in praiſe of your deliverer," ſaid the lady with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, as the former drew an animated deſcription of St. Julian, and his fortunate exertions in her favour.

"Not warm!" replied Charlotte, ſurpriſed at the manner, rather than the words of her aunt—"not too warm, at leaſt, on ſuch a ſubject! Juſtice and gratitude are due to every perſon who renders us any eſſential ſervice, and I ſhould be a contemptible wretch to withhold them where merit is ſo conſpicuous."—This eulogium was uttered more energetically than what ſhe had formerly ſaid, and ſhe ſaw her aunt preparing to notice it in a diſagreeable manner.

Superior to the little foibles of her ſex, and rather pitying thoſe who ſuffered under their influence,

influence, than provoked by any inconvenience they might occaſion herſelf, Charlotte endeavoured to turn the converſation into another channel.

Her well-meant attempt was however fruitleſs; for juſt at this moment the affectionate mother obſerved a gentleman paying ſome attention to one of her daughters in the ſhrubbery below the window, and ſhe inſtantly exclaimed againſt the Abbeſs for ſending ſuch a pert, awkward thing from the Convent, proteſting ſhe never looked at her without the picture of an Engliſh May-pole preſenting itſelf to her fancy.

"*A-propos* of pictures, my dear Madam," ſaid Charlotte, catching at the word; "the ſmall miniature I got copied for Madame de Narbonne arrived while I was at the Caſtle, and knowing your taſte and partiality for paintings, I brought it with me to ſhew you;—the execution is ſaid to be in a ſuperior ſtyle, but you ſhall judge for yourſelf—ſo *voilà!*" continued ſhe, putting her hand firſt into one pocket, and then in the other, with a look of conſternation.—"Ah! pray Heaven I have not loſt it in the foreſt!—Bleſs me! that is ſurely the caſe, for in my poſſeſſion it certainly is not at preſent!"

Madame de Clermont caſt a glance of incredulity at her niece, and ſpitefully remarked that it was

was rather too ſhort an acquaintance to juſtify ſuch a reward.

" Madame!" cried Charlotte, at a loſs for her meaning.

" Oh! to be ſure," exclaimed the lady, with a ſignificant toſs of her head, " you are mighty dull of comprehenſion!—Stupidity is a convenient cloak ſometimes!"

" Alas!" cried a young lady, who was on a viſit at Clermont,—" alas!" repeated ſhe, with a theatrical air, " ſome of thoſe horrid Vendeans have doubtleſſly got hold of it, and we ſhall ſee it no more!—Pray has the gallant St. Julian any appearance of a pilferer, my dear?"

" Nonſenſe!" replied Charlotte, ſtill ſearching her pockets, " I think not of St. Julian—my picture is loſt!"

" I have heard of that young man," ſaid M. de Clermont, entering the room as he ſpoke; " the Royaliſts mention him in high terms; Charette himſelf is warmly attached to him; but he tells me there is a veil of impenetrable myſtery over his earlier years which has hitherto defeated every attempt to elucidate: he is convinced, nevertheleſs, that his birth is noble, and avers ſuch to be the opinion of all who know him."

While

While M. de Clermont was ſpeaking, Charlotte continued indefatigable in her ſearch for the miniature—to no purpoſe, however; the miniature was in other hands than ſhe thought of, and in hands not likely to loſe it a ſecond time.

A tranſient hope now aroſe that it might yet be in the carriage, which ſhe had not quitted till her arrival at the cottage: in the coach it was conſequently ſought for, but equally in vain!

Madame de Clermont, whoſe petulance had now given place to curioſity, became intereſted for the recovery of this unfortunate painting, and a ſervant was next morning diſpatched to enquire for it at the grove of pines. It was a laſt reſource; but he returned as he went—that is to ſay, without it.

The peaſant's wife, indeed, told him that ſhe ſaw one of the ſoldiers pick up a piece of paper near where the coach had been placed, but ſhe neither knew what it contained, nor where it went afterwards.

Nothing further could now be done on the occaſion; Madame de Clermont was forced to reſt contented, and Charlotte found herſelf obliged to remain in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe, which Swift ſays, "is the life of a ſpider."

Thoſe readers, however, who may probably diſlike

diſlike ſuch an exiſtence, are entitled to a leſs aerial ſtation, and ſhall have it.

We have already obſerved that, on the evening of Charlotte's accident, it was late before ſhe left the Caſtle of Narbonne. Occupied with the Counteſs in looking over ſome ſmall paintings, and comparing their execution with her own, ſhe thought not of the lapſe of time, nor the intricacies of the foreſt, till the great clock, in the weſtern tower, warned her to depart inſtantly.

A few minutes prior to this, ſhe had been examining, with much attention, a very beautiful miniature which Madame de Narbonne took from a gold caſe to ſhew her.

It was a picture evidently done by the hand of a maſter, and repreſented a face inexpreſſibly lovely. Youth and elegance beamed on every feature. The artiſt ſeemed to have poſſeſſed the Promethean fire, for the breath of life almoſt appeared to iſſue from her parted vermilion lips.

Without lifting her eyes from this faſcinating image, Charlotte requeſted to know if the original ſtill exiſted, and if ſhe was not flattered by ſo charming a reſemblance?

Madame de Narbonne was ſilent, and Charlotte turned round to repeat the queſtion.

"No,"

"No," ſaid the Counteſs, with a deep ſigh, "ſhe is equally beautiful."

"But lives ſhe, my dear Madam?" cried the other with increaſing curioſity. "I did not imagine any thing ſo celeſtial was an inhabitant of the earth!"

"Of the earth, ſaid you?" repeated Madame de Narbonne, raiſing her humid eyes with a look of inconceivable woe; "alas! yes, ſhe ſtill lives, but loſt to the world—to the very light of day!—Ah me! what a fate for one ſo young—ſo lovely!—But whither am I wandering?" added ſhe. "You know her not, my dear Charlotte. We will change the ſubject if you pleaſe; ſome time or other, perhaps—— but we will change the ſubject, I ſay."

Charlotte was mute, and urged not enquiries which evidently pained the perſon they were applied to.

Buried in thought, ſhe ſtill gazed on the miniature as it lay before her on the table. A ſervant for the ſecond time appeared to ſay M. de Clermont's coachman was anxious to proceed on his journey, as he was unacquainted with the road through the foreſt, and his maſter had ordered him on that account to return before ſunſet.

Charlotte

Charlotte looked at her watch, and was aſtoniſhed to find ſhe had ſo far exceeded the appointed period.

Her own picture lay cloſe to the one ſhe had ſo lately admired. In examining her watch, a piece of paper had been removed, and now half covered them. Their ſize and caſes were ſimilar. While ſpeaking to the Counteſs, ſhe haſtily ſnatched up the wrong one, and, unconſcious of the miſtake, put it into her pocket.

The Counteſs knew ſhe was to ſhew that done for herſelf at Clermont; and we have already ſeen how the other came into the poſſeſſion of St. Julian.

Charlotte's error was not diſcovered at the Caſtle for ſome days. Madame de Narbonne had depoſited the remaining trinkets in an ivory cabinet, where ſhe uſually kept them. Her ſpirits were low; and entertaining no ſuſpicion of what had happened, the neceſſity of any minute examination never once occurred as ſhe looſely wrapped them in the paper they lay upon.

When Charlotte, on her next viſit to the Counteſs, communicated the diſaſter that had befallen her picture, it was agreed another ſhould be drawn to replace it. Something in the drapery

of

of the other miniature appeared an improvement, and ſhe wiſhed to adopt it for her own.

Full of this idea, ſhe once more requeſted to ſee the ſo much admired painting, in order to give proper directions for the intended alteration.

It was ſought for accordingly; but vain was the ſearch—not a trace of it was to be found.

Every drawer in the ivory cabinet was turned out, every paper that contained any thing, unwrapped; in doing this, a parcel unobſerved dropped on the floor. Charlotte at laſt perceived it, and to her inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment, diſcovered her own picture.

The myſtery was now explained, and the loſs of the other accounted for.

But alarming were the effects produced by this miſtake on the mind of the Counteſs; the anxious ſolicitude ſhe viſibly laboured under from the firſt moment it was found to be miſſing, increaſed to extreme agitation when the accident proved no longer doubtful; aſſured of this circumſtance, her diſtreſs became almoſt too poignant for concealment.

This, nevertheleſs, in pity to her companion's feelings, ſhe endeavoured to accompliſh.

Short-lived, however, were her hopes of ſucceſs; the predominant ſenſation could not be ſuppreſſed;

 claſping

claſping her hands together, ſhe burſt into an agony of tears, and threw herſelf on the ſofa.

Conſidering her own heedleſs inattention as the original cauſe of this new affliction to Madame de Narbonne, Charlotte gazed on her in ſpeechleſs anguiſh, uncertain how to offer conſolation, or in what way to atone for her error.

At length ſhe broke ſilence, and in a low and tremulous accent entreated the forgiveneſs of the Counteſs for her unintentional offence.—"Monſieur de Clermont, Madame," added ſhe, "has heard of the Chevalier de St. Julian before my unfortunate accident happened: I will requeſt him to enquire."

"Ah no! no!" cried Madame de Narbonne, interrupting her with eagerneſs, "enquiry might increaſe the evil, but the probability is ſmall of leſſening it by that means; beſides, we know not where, or at what time this fatal loſs took place, and applying to ſtrangers on ſuch an uncertainty, would only, if unſucceſsful —— Ah what would—what might it not be productive of!"

The Counteſs pauſed; ſhe again raiſed her humid eyes to heaven; the look was reſignation to irremediable misfortune, and drying her tears, ſhe ſoon proceeded with more compoſure.

"You aſk forgiveneſs of me, my dear young friend—alas! what a reproof do I feel your requeſt!—

requeſt!—From me ought to have come the petition for pardon!—Your's was an unconſcious error. In diſtreſſing you on account of it, I have committed a premeditated one;—ah no! not premeditated neither—that is too harſh a term for my behaviour. The feelings of the moment, from a ſenſe of the fatal conſequences that might attend this deprivation, threw me off my guard;—excuſe it—I meant not to hurt you, but am myſelf mortified to find that time and ſorrow have not yet taught me more ſelf-command. Let us mutually forget what cannot now be amended; but ere we finally diſmiſs the ſubject, I muſt beg what has paſſed relative to this affair, may be conſigned to oblivion;—mention not any thing reſpecting the picture that is loſt; you can account for the recovery of your own in a ſatisfactory manner, without naming the fate of the other. A caution of this nature muſt have a ſtrange appearance; but hereafter you may perhaps be convinced that my reaſon for doing ſo is neceſſary and forcible."

The Counteſs ceaſed ſpeaking for a moment; ſhe held out her hand to Charlotte;—her knowledge of the mind of the latter convinced her that aſſurances of ſecrecy were not requiſite; ſhe therefore interrupted the effuſions of her heart, and the

converſation inſtantly, as if by mutual conſent, took a different turn.

When Charlotte retired to her chamber, the incidents of the day naturally occurred to her memory, and baniſhed ſleep. Though perſuaded ſhe had carried her point ſo far as to obtain the good opinion of the Counteſs, ſtill it evidently appeared that her confidence was yet withheld from her. At the cloſe of the picture converſation, ſhe had however received a hint which ſeemed to indicate that even it might one day be attained. As her acquaintance with Madame de Narbonne increaſed, ſo did the growing attachment ſhe felt for her; and the proſpect now, though diſtantly held out of a future confidence, was ſo truly gratifying, that in contemplating its enjoyment, ſhe almoſt forgot the late ſource of chagrin, of which ſhe had originally been the unfortunate, but innocent cauſe; and when at laſt her mind recurred to it, the reſtleſs agitation and curioſity it produced, effectually occupied her thoughts till the firſt rays of the ſun gilt the top of the oppoſite turret, and the lengthened ſhadows of the trees appeared in fantaſtic forms as its beams partially pierced through the foreſt.

To procure repoſe was now a vain expectation; ſhe left her bed, and ſoftly deſcending the ſtaircaſe, knocked

knocked at the porter's lodge. The man had long been accuſtomed to her early rambles, and the maſſy gate was inſtantly opened at her requeſt.

Undetermined whither to bend her courſe, ſhe ſtopped a few paces from the court to conſider which path ſhe ſhould purſue.

A ſlight ruſtling amongſt ſome underwood on the other ſide of a hedge, followed by the ſound of a quick ſtep, reached her ear; and turning round to diſcover the cauſe of it, a perſon approached, whom ſhe ſoon recognized for one of the lay-ſiſters at the Convent.

Aſtoniſhed to ſee any one belonging to that community at ſo early a period of the morning, ſhe was going to accoſt her, when the woman, glancing a haſty look at her, exclaimed—"Ah! I am miſtaken," and ſuddenly ſtriking into another path, diſappeared in the next inſtant from her ſight.

Confounded more than ever at ſo ſtrange an incident, Charlotte reſolved to proceed to the Nunnery, and mention what ſhe had obſerved to the Chanoineſſe.

She had nearly turned the Rock of Narbonne, and was paſſing through the grove on the moſt inacceſſible ſide of that huge maſs of ſtone, when all at once ſtrains of ſoft and celeſtial harmony ſeemed to iſſue from its ſolid ſubſtance, and floating

along the ſmooth ſurface of the river in a low and ſolemn cadence, gradually died away before ſhe could poſitively aſcertain whether the ſound proceeded from the water, or the ſtupendous rock that hung frowning over it.

Again Charlotte looked around, and liſtened for its return; but it returned no more ! !

She now recollected what Veronica had told her reſpecting myſterious muſic being heard in that quarter, and began to think ſhe had been rather premature in her cenſures on the good Nun's credulity.

Inſenſibly ſhe quickened her pace. An impulſe, ſhe tried not to define, had hitherto hurried her onwards, till recovering a little from the firſt ſurpriſe, ſhe bluſhed at a weakneſs which in any other perſon would have met her decided reprehenſion: ſounds, ſuch as ſhe had heard, could not proceed from bad or wicked ſpirits, and from good ones ſhe had nothing to fear.

Reſolved, therefore, to puniſh herſelf for thus yielding to childiſh apprehenſions, ſhe returned again to the ſame ſpot from whence the muſic had reached her.

Cautiouſly ſhe walked round, and with minute exactneſs examined every poſſible ſpot within her obſervation.

No ſound was again emitted; once ſomething white waved for an inſtant, as if from an aperture high in the rock. A large and very beautiful bird, of which Charlotte knew not the ſpecies, darted from a neighbouring branch, and apparently anſwering the ſignal, neither of them were any longer viſible.

"What an eventful morning is this!" cried Charlotte, with her eyes ſtill rivetted on the projection above.—"Let me, however, not alarm others with a recital of occurrences ſo perfectly incomprehenſible to myſelf. Such a confirmation of their ſtories as I have now met with, would effectually terrify the poor Nuns were I to repeat them:—no, I will not mention this laſt incident till I am able to inveſtigate it better.—As for the lay-ſiſter, I *muſt* ſpeak of my rencounter with her. In times like the preſent we cannot be too cautious; appearances are ſuſpicious, and the cloak of religion is indiſcriminately worn by ſinners and ſaints.—I will at leaſt perform my duty in acquainting the Chanoineſſe of what I have met with; they may afterwards take their own meaſures upon it as they think proper."

Fraught with this deſign, ſhe entered the cell of Madame Veronica, and acquainted her with the motive of her early viſit.

The Chanoineſſe ſaid, Mademoiſelle muſt certainly be miſtaken, for the lay-ſiſter could not have been out of the houſe at that time of the morning.

Charlotte perſiſted in her opinion, and averred it was Siſter Agnes whom ſhe had ſeen.

The Nun ſhrugged her ſhoulders, and replied, that if it was ſo, it was very ſurpriſing, for that Siſter Agnes was the perſon who always attended the Lady Abbeſs when indiſpoſed; that a complaint ſhe was ſubject to, generally attacked her in the night ſeaſon, and on theſe occaſions ſhe never permitted any of the community, the lay-ſiſter excepted, to enter her chamber, nor allowed them to come near it even in the morning till informed it was convenient to ſee them;—that the Superior had been ſeized with one of her accuſtomed fits of ſickneſs on the preceding evening, and Siſter Agnes was ſummoned to watch by her;—as neither of them had yet appeared, ſhe could not, ſhe ſaid, for her part, conceive how the lay-ſiſter could be in two places at once: but as nothing was impoſſible to God, it might nevertheleſs be ſo, though a poor weak, fallible creature like her was unable to comprehend it.

Charlotte ſmiled at the good Nun's ſimplicity of mind, and admired the accommodating nature of her religious opinions.

But

But though ſilenced, ſhe was by no means convinced:—not only her voice, but the perſon alſo of the lay-ſiſter was too well known to her not to feel perſuaded there was no illuſion in the caſe; however, to argue the matter any longer with her preſent antagoniſt was uſeleſs: ſhe therefore propoſed to enquire after the health of the Abbeſs, and then bid them both adieu.

This manœuvre ſhe imagined would in ſome degree elucidate the matter; for ſhe ſcarcely conceived Siſter Agnes could yet be returned, as the path ſhe ſtruck into, apparently led in a contrary direction from the Convent.

Voltaire ſays, "what is probable ſeldom happens." Charlotte knew not that the lay-ſiſter was better acquainted with the different windings in the grove than ſhe ſuſpected: ſhe had likewiſe forgotten to take into her calculation the time ſpent by herſelf at the Rock of Narbonne.

The Lady Abbeſs returned her acknowledgments, but was ſtill too much indiſpoſed to ſee company.

Siſter Agnes delivered the meſſage, holding the door a little open, and haſtily cloſed it the moment ſhe ceaſed ſpeaking. Her caution, however, was ineffectual; for Charlotte got a tranſient glimpſe of the Abbeſs, who, inſtead of being ill and in bed,

was in the act of hurrying off a long wrapping cloak, which ſhe threw on the floor, where lay a large hood juſt dropped from a chair—circumſtances that evidently beſpoke the wearer returned from ſome ſecret excurſion in which ſickneſs was out of the queſtion.

Startled by appearances that ſeemed totally to confute Veronica's aſſertions in one inſtance, and her own in another, Charlotte turned from the door in aſtoniſhment greater than ever.

It was, ſhe thought, now clear that ill health prevented not the Abbeſs from ſeeing her; and ſome other perſon muſt have been miſtaken for Siſter Agnes in the grove.

Attempting in various ways to account for theſe inconſiſtencies, ſhe purſued her path to the Caſtle, without intending to return by the Rock of Narbonne; unconſciouſly, however, her ſteps took that direction, and the ſame ſtrains of harmony, though in a lower note, were again heard.

"Heavens!" exclaimed ſhe aloud. The inviſible muſician ſeemed to have caught the word, for in an inſtant the melody ceaſed, and all was once more ſilent!

"This then is at leaſt no illuſion," ſaid Charlotte; "if I live—if I breathe, it is not!"

Fixed

Fixed with increaſing wonder, ſhe ſtood like the mute ſtatue of ſurpriſe, with her eyes rivetted on the projection above her.

Again the beautiful bird was in view; it alternately fluttered from the branch of a tree to the rock, and then back to the former, as if unwilling to enter into confinement.

Charlotte imagined ſhe ſaw the white ſignal once more repeated; but either her eyes deceived her, or the motion was too quick to admit of aſcertaining the ſuppoſition.

Determined, if poſſible, to obtain ſome gratification of her curioſity, ſhe retired behind a corner of the rock, from whence ſhe could, unobſerved, remark if any perſon was really near the bird, who wiſhed to avoid diſcovery.

The tree it reſorted to was high, and oppoſite to a part of the ſtony mountain where the perpendicular ſurface was uncommonly rugged, and thickly covered over with various deſcriptions of flowering ſhrubs and underwood.

She had not remained here many minutes, before a ſoft plaintive air was again heard to vibrate above her: its faint and tremulous ſtrains ſeemed to indicate caution and anxiety; but the ſource from whence it iſſued, was ſtill beyond the reach of her ſcrutiny.

As the muſic continued, the bird became more reſtleſs; it hopped about from branch to branch, and ſometimes anſwered the inviſible performer's notes with aſtoniſhing exactneſs; at length, as the laſt ſtrain died away, Charlotte caught another glimpſe of the ſnowy ſignal. It was no viſion engendered in the regions of fancy; clearly, diſtinctly ſhe ſaw it; yet the momentary appearance was of too tranſient a nature to admit of minute examination, though ſolicitous to procure it on ſo ſtrange an occurrence.

Ere ſhe could recal her wandering ideas, the bird darted towards the rock, and vaniſhed from her view.

It was now apparently certain that there exiſted an inhabitant in the neighbourhood of her ſtation; but where, or in what manner this myſterious being paſſed its time, or why ſo fearful of diſcovery, was an enigma beyond her abilities to account for. Madame de Narbonne, however, ſhe ſuſpected was better informed on the ſubject. It was not probable that ſhe, who ſo frequently reſorted hither, ſhould be unacquainted with circumſtances that, in ſo ſhort a period, had twice come within the compaſs of Charlotte's own obſervation. It is true, the event had occurred early in the morning, at a time when the Counteſs was ſeldom to be met with; yet

yet even this fact was of little conſequence, when others of a more weighty nature were adverted to: theſe, conſidered in every different point of view, ſtrongly indicated Madame de Narbonne's knowledge of ſome important ſecret connected with this ſolitary ſpot; and the pride of conſcious worth felt humbled in Charlotte's breaſt, as ſhe recollected that ſhe had not yet been thought to merit a confidence which her own feelings told her ſhe deſerved to obtain.

Hurt by a reſerve ſo perſevering and unaccountable, ſhe felt almoſt tempted to mention the incidents of the morning to the Counteſs; but on her return learned that ſhe had not yet left her chamber; and the time that intervened gave her leiſure to reflect on the pain ſhe might inflict by the impropriety of ſuch a proceeding, ſince no plea could authorize her to pry into any circumſtance Madame de Narbonne choſe to conceal from her knowledge; and that ſuch a circumſtance exiſted, could no longer be doubtful.

To extort the confidence of the Counteſs was not in her power, nor would officious curioſity give her a title to claim it. Was Madame de Narbonne accountable for her actions to her?—What right had ſhe to expect the communication of ſecrets that evidently required concealment?—

Certainly

Certainly none! and conſequently it was the height of preſumption to ſuppoſe it her due.

Aſhamed of the meanneſs ſhe had nearly committed, Charlotte felt mortified at the intended impropriety of her conduct; and, complaining of a head-ache, retired to her own apartment, where ſhe took herſelf ſeverely to taſk for the erroneous ideas thus recently indulged, and firmly reſolved to guard againſt the impulſe of the moment, from whatever ſource it proceeded, in future.

Conceiving, however, that it might not be amiſs to mention what had occurred in her way to the Convent, ſhe briefly related the lay-ſiſter's appearance near the Caſtle, and her own remarks upon the incomprehenſible behaviour of the Lady Abbeſs.

During this recital Madame de Narbonne repeatedly changed colour; but ſhe liſtened in ſilence, and ſeemed buried in thought.

Charlotte's concluding obſervation roufed her, however, from this mental reverie.

"Perhaps the Superior and Siſter Agnes were carrying on ſome political tranſaction that ought to be enquired into."

She ſtarted at the idea; but immediately recollecting herſelf, aſſured Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſhe might be perfectly eaſy on that head; "for," added ſhe,

ſhe, with a faint ſmile, "I myſelf will be anſwerable for their principles, and I undertake to promiſe they will not interfere in any national concern that may prove detrimental to the good of their country."—So ſaying, ſhe lifted a book from the window-ſeat, and, repairing to one of her favourite walks, left Charlotte to reflect at leiſure on the various incidents of the day.

The meditations of the latter were ſoon, however, interrupted by the arrival of ſeveral people in one of the courts; their looks and deportment ſeemed to indicate ſome uncommon occurrence, in which they were deeply intereſted, and ſhe immediately deſcended to procure intelligence on the ſubject.

A friend, with whom ſhe was in habits of intimacy, met her as ſhe left the grand portico; he placed her arm within his, and led her to one of the more diſtant walks that wound through the ſhrubbery.

This gentleman ſhe knew was an Ariſtocrat; but his principles, like her own, were rational, and of courſe tended equally to the ſame end, though the means uſed for attaining it might perhaps vary a little.

"I know," ſaid he, "though a Republican in ſome of your opinions, you are a citizen of the world

in others; I therefore conſider you in the latter character, as one entirely diveſted of all narrow prejudice, and ſolely attached to the cauſe of morality, and the good of the nation, under whatever form it is effected. In what degree the circumſtance I am now going to mention, can poſſibly prove conducive to ſuch a view, I pretend not to determine. Thoſe who profeſs to act from conſcientious motives, and a regard for the well-being of their fellow-creatures, might perhaps imagine that a ſyſtem of coercion was not always the moſt likely one to inſpire ſentiments of a conciliatory nature: it muſt be owned, however, that the touch of the trigger carries a concluſive argument ſufficiently forcible to ſilence where it cannot convince. How far humanity may be outraged on the occaſion, is another affair—the accuſing ſpirit muſt ſettle that matter hereafter; at preſent one is apt to ſuppoſe that the neceſſity of being obliged to live under ground, excluded from the light of day, and in a manner buried alive, were circumſtances in themſelves abundantly diſtreſſing, without the additional accompaniments of bayonets and gunpowder."

"Bleſs me, Sir," cried Charlotte, with a look of ſurpriſe, "what am I to underſtand by all this whimſical preparation? Has any thing new or extraordinary

extraordinary happened? Keep me not longer in ſuſpenſe, I beſeech you."

"Not much," replied the gentleman drily; "only another inſtance of the gentle mode in which modern reformation conducts itſelf, and a freſh proof of the uniform impartiality of Republican juſtice; the miniſters of which ſeldom compliment themſelves with any appearance of feeling—"that ſpark of friendſhip for human-kind, that particle of the dove, kneaded into our frame along with the elements of the wolf and the ſerpent*;" but, on the contrary, generally involve all they conceive their enemies in one indiſcriminate ruin. An affair of this nature has juſt occurred, that ſeems to have rouſed a train of ſuſpicions in the mind of De la Ville and ſome of his aſſociates, which may prove difficult to eradicate, and in that caſe muſt be attended with troubleſome conſequences to many in this neighbourhood, unleſs you agree to exert that influence over his conduct which I have frequently ſeen him feel without any exertion on your ſide to occaſion it.

"Of the various contrivances to which the Royaliſts have often had recourſe for enſuring their ſafety, many wonderful details have been given;

* Hume's Eſſays.

few

few of them, however, appear more aſtoniſhing, or excite compaſſion to a greater height, than that of which I now ſpeak. It is not without reaſon that the war of La Vendée has been conſidered one of the moſt extraordinary that the annals of the world ever have recorded. It was ſaid in ancient times that armies ſprang out of the earth; but this was merely a poetical fiction: in La Vendée it is realized. The Royaliſts have dug, or found caverns, into which they carry pieces of cannon, and ſtation conſiderable bodies of men: it is there in particular that the Prieſts, Monks, women, and children endeavour to conceal themſelves, and any little property they are fortunate enough to preſerve from the rapacity of the ruling powers. Some of the number are appointed to perform the office of ſentinel for the reſt; they generally diſguiſe themſelves like woodcutters, and carefully obſerve what paſſes at a diſtance from the tops of the higheſt trees, which they climb for that purpoſe, from whence they give the alarm to their friends by a certain kind of whiſtle, when any ſuſpicious circumſtance occurs. Sometimes this poſt is filled by women who tend cows in the vicinity, by young ſhepherds, or by children. The entrance to the caverns is commonly a heap of earth covered with ſod, over which the paſſenger may

tread

tread without riſking a diſcovery. It has ſo happened that I have been more than once immured in theſe damp and gloomy abodes; of courſe I can ſpeak of them experimentally.

" One in the foreſt of Narbonne has juſt been laid open, and the fate of its wretched inhabitants inſtantly determined in the uſual laconic ſtyle of national puniſhment. Intelligence was received of this affair a few minutes prior to your appearance, and various ſurmiſes have been formed on the occaſion. De la Ville ſeems reſolved to have the foreſt cleared of neighbours of a ſimilar deſcription; he proteſts he will apply to the Committee of Safety for a force competent to ſuch an undertaking, and talks as if he knew more about the particular haunts of the Royaliſts, than I believe is the caſe. However, if his requeſt is granted, and the ſearch proves ſucceſsful, a dreadful ſcene of carnage muſt unavoidably enſue; for it is certain many of theſe places of concealment really exiſt in that quarter, which contain not merely aged and defenceleſs fugitives, but armed warriors, well prepared to meet thoſe who may be brought to encounter them, with every proof of the moſt deſperate valour and unyielding reſiſtance—men, who would not ſcruple to reduce even the Caſtle itſelf, and all within its walls, to aſhes, in the cauſe either

either of ſelf-preſervation or revenge; for De la Ville has long been juſtly obnoxious to the friends of Royalty, and the Counteſs is ſcarcely regarded with a more favourable eye, in conſequence of her ill-ſorted union with ſo contemptible a character."

Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſhuddered at the horrid idea that preſented itſelf at the concluſion of the above ſentence. She entreated her companion, however, to proceed, and eagerly enquired in what manner the recent diſcovery had been effected.

"* Two Chouans," replied the gentleman, "who were taken priſoners, carried to L'Orient, and about to be tried by the Military Commiſſion, promiſed to point out the abode of their former aſſociates, provided a pardon could by that means be ſecured for themſelves. They obtained it:—Dardure, Lieutenant of Grenadiers, of the 11th Pariſian Battalion, undertook to go and viſit theſe gloomy retreats, put on the diſguiſe of a Chouan, and ſet off, accompanied by the two guides, who ſhewed him one of the caverns, but kept at a diſtance for fear of being recognized. Over this ſubterraneous camp an aged woman was ſtanding ſentinel. To her Dardure addreſſed himſelf in the language of a Chouan, and, by dint of artifice and entreaty, pre-

* A real event.

vailed

vailed on her to indicate the entrance. He had before concerted his plans with a detachment concealed at a ſmall diſtance. A geſture was the ſignal of their approach: Dardure entered at the head of them, and found the cave full of peaſants, with Monks and Prieſts in their clerical habits, together with ſeveral women and children; they were immediately ſeized, conducted to L'Orient, and—ſhot!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Charlotte; "but tell me," and ſhe trembled with eagerneſs, "tell me, were there any perſons of ſuperior rank—any Chiefs of the Vendeans amongſt the number of thoſe unhappy victims? You mentioned armed warriors; did this cavern contain any of that deſcription?"

"Several!" was the anſwer. Charlotte thought of her gallant preſerver, St. Julian; ſhe gaſped for breath, and during ſome moments was unable to articulate a ſingle ſyllable.

At the period of her interview with the Chevalier, ſome expreſſions had been occaſionally dropped in the courſe of their converſation, which, compared with what ſhe now heard, convinced her he was well acquainted with that quarter of the country, particularly the foreſt; no wonder then that this recollection alarmed her for the ſafety of a man

man to whom, under Providence, ſhe apparently owed the prolongation of herown exiſtence.

In reply to her queſtions relative to the names of the ſufferers, ſhe could receive no ſatisfaction; all thoſe her informer repeated to her, happened to be totally unknown.

With trembling anxiety ſhe requeſted he would endeavour to learn if the Chevalier St. Julian was amongſt the number.

"The Chevalier St Julian!" exclaimed the gentleman with a look of ſurpriſe: "are you acquainted with the Chevalier St. Julian?"

Charlotte gave an aſſenting bow, and inſtantly put a ſimilar interrogatory to him, by entreating to hear if they were perſonally known to each other.

"They were ſo," he ſaid.

"Is he much eſteemed by the leaders of his party?" ſhe aſked. "I have been told Monſieur Charette profeſſes a friendſhip for him."

"Not only Monſieur Charette," returned the gentleman, "but the whole body of Royaliſts in La Vendée entertain the higheſt opinion of him; and what is ſtill more to his honour, he fully merits every thing they can ſay in his favour. The Chevalier St. Julian is a young man above all praiſe; I know not his fellow."

The little ſhe had ſeen of him already ſerved to convince her of this aſſertion. Of his hiſtory, however, ſhe could obtain no particular account; the ſame veil of myſtery which ſeemed to ſhroud his conduct equally with what M. de Clermont had formerly mentioned on the ſubject, here continued to envelop it. M. de Maur ſpoke in warm terms of his character; but further his knowledge did not extend.

Charlotte now related the manner of her introduction to him as a ſufficient apology for her viſible ſolicitude to procure ſome aſſurance of his ſafety; and had the pleaſure to find every apprehenſion done away by the information ſhe received of his being ſtationed in a different part of the country at the time the above horrid tranſaction took place.

M. de Maur, who apparently delighted in the ſubject, continued the eulogium on his young friend, and related many anecdotes in which the Chevalier made a diſtinguiſhed figure. As he proceeded, he could not help repeatedly expreſſing his aſtoniſhment that ſuch a character ſhould ſeemingly ſtand alone in the world; any parent, he ſaid, however exalted his ſtation, might juſtly be proud to acknowledge a relative, whoſe every action was of a nature to reflect the higheſt honour on all who had the happineſs to be connected with him.

That

That his family were evidently, however, in a ſuperior line of life, a circumſtance had once occurred, he ſaid, which, in his opinion, placed that matter beyond a doubt: Charette, in an engagement with a ſuperior number of Republicans, was ſurrounded, and on the point of falling a victim to their fury;—exhauſted by fatigue, and oppreſſed by the fearful odds with which he had to ſtruggle, the criſis of his fate hung upon a moment. St. Julian perceived his ſituation from a diſtance; he flew to his aid, cutting down all that attempted to oppoſe his ſteps: Charette was reſcued; but his deliverer, it was ſuppoſed, mortally wounded. The Vendean leader was in agonies at this intimation, and poſitively refuſed the ſurgeon's offered aſſiſtance, though he was himſelf in the utmoſt want of it, till ſuch time as his young friend was previouſly attended to. The latter had a deep wound near his breaſt; and in preparing to dreſs it, the ſurgeon wiſhed to remove a very large and valuable locket, which hung ſuſpended from his neck, attached to a chain of ſolid gold. To this propoſal, however, his patient would by no means accede; and, though ſcarcely able to ſpeak, permitted it not to be taken off. I ſometimes viſited him during his confinement, and one day led the converſation purpoſely to this circumſtance. It did not appear to be a topic

he felt inclined to dwell upon; but not being able to decline it totally, I was briefly told that the object of my curioſity had been placed in its preſent poſition by his father, who enjoined him upon no account whatever to remove it, as its preſervation would, in all human probability, aſcertain his future deſtiny. Upon the concluſion of theſe myſterious words, the Chevalier immediately changed the diſcourſe, and no opportunity afterwards offered to renew it a ſecond time. But," continued M. de Maur, "we muſt now turn our thoughts on other matters, and endeavour to fix on ſome means for remedying the preſent evil."

After forming ſeveral plans for this purpoſe, one was at length adopted, which ſeemed favourable to their views. It was communicated to M. de Clermont, who joined them in their walk; and, ſanctioned by his approbation, Charlotte ſo far conſtrained her feelings, as to exert her influence over the mind of De la Ville, in perſuading him to renounce his intended application to the Committee of Safety. Fortunately his uſual counſellor, Auſtin Marat, was under the neceſſity of being abſent for ſome time, and Charlotte ſoon had the happineſs to find herſelf ſucceſsful. His thoughts were artfully led into another channel; a few weeks elapſed without permitting them to recur;

new objects then ſtarted up to occupy them; and the incident of the diſcovery, with its attendant conſequences, was ſoon no longer remembered; or if by chance recollected, it was only to laugh at his former idea of any further danger ariſing from, what he pronounced, ſo improbable a quarter.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

" To beguile the times,
" Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
" Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,
" But be the ſerpent under't."

SHAKESPEARE.

SOON after this period, the whim ſeized De la Ville to give a *fête champêtre*, which was to conclude with a maſqued ball in the evening.

Some great man in the neighbouring province had lately figured in a ſimilar way even in the midſt of war and devaſtation. De la Ville's head and heart were much on a par as to their ſterling qualities; the firſt would never render him melancholy by too great a portion of thought, neither

would his feelings be much injured by the ſenſibility of the latter: De la Ville was naturally, therefore, as well entitled to play the fool as any man in France, and he determined to make uſe of his privilege.

The original idea, nevertheleſs, proceeded not from himſelf; the indefatigable Auſtin Marat had firſt ſuggeſted it, but in ſuch a manner as left him at liberty to ſuppoſe it the child of his own creation: every wheel of courſe was put in motion to ſet it going with diſtinguiſhed *eclat*.

Charette's recent ſucceſs had alarmed the Republicans; emiſſaries of all deſcriptions were employed to watch his progreſs, as well as the ſteps of thoſe whoſe principles were ſuſpected to lean that way. An entertainment like that now propoſed, would probably furniſh room for obſervation and intelligence; if properly managed, it might, perhaps, throw the cautious off their guard, and lead the volatile into unconſcious diſcoveries. The experiment was at leaſt worth the trial, and neceſſary preparations were accordingly made for it.

To effect the ſecret deſign of the meeting, a general invitation was requiſite: ſuch was therefore given to every family of note in the neighbourhood, without any diſtinction of political opinion,

opinion, provided they were not openly engaged in a decided oppoſition to the Convention.

Too near the ſeat of civil war not to be apprehenſive of the conſequences when any new exertion of activity was obſervable, in anſwer to ſome vague enquiries, Madame de Narbonne learned with aſtoniſhment the cauſe of this freſh commotion in the Caſtle; but finding herſelf not conſidered of ſufficient importance to be conſulted on the occaſion, nor indeed even properly informed of it, ſhe determined to make uſe of the plauſible excuſe this piece of neglect furniſhed, to avoid mixing in ſcenes ſhe diſliked, or aſſociating with people who were diſagreeable to her. Unheeded, unobſerved, and unregretted, ſhe ſought the ſolitude of her own apartment, and there diſburthened her heavy heart of its uſual load, by giving vent to a flood of tears, which continued to flow without reſtraint till the morning ſun darted his firſt rays into her chamber. An unrefreſhing ſlumber then weighed down her weary eyelids, from which ſhe awoke with an intenſe head-ache; and her maid was directed to ſay that ſhe was too much indiſpoſed to ſee company, ſhould any of the viſiters, by requeſting to wait upon her, evince their knowledge that ſhe ſtill exiſted.

Thus broke the day on Madame de Narbonne, which was to be uſhered in with mirth and feſtivity by every other mortal but herſelf, under the roof of her anceſtors!

As the company aſſembled, they beheld themſelves ſurrounded with every appearance of ſplendour and magnificence that immenſe wealth or human vanity could exhibit. The hacknied and ill-underſtood ſyſtem of equality ſeemed totally conſigned to oblivion by its late ſtrenuous ſupporter; and the variety of gueſts, whom curioſity, deſign, amuſement, or idleneſs had collected together, flattered his ſelf-conſequence too much to leave room for reflection on the probable effects that might enſue even to his own ſide of the queſtion by ſuch a combination of jarring intereſts, ſuſpecting and ſuſpected by each other. Luckily, however, his chief counſellor, Auſtin Marat, poſſeſſed more ſelf-command, and contrived to regulate the various operations of the day in a manner ſuitable to the purpoſe for which it was ſecretly intended. The opportunity was too favourable to be neglected by one who ſo well knew its value; and, amongſt other arrangements, he failed not to inſtruct thoſe in the honourable office of ſpyſhip, on whoſe fidelity he imagined himſelf entitled to depend with the greateſt ſafety. A romantic ſituation in the foreſt had been previouſly

pitched

pitched upon for the ſcene of action: temporary buildings were erected amongſt the trees; and on the banks of the river were ſeveral of thoſe alcoves and grottos, whoſe formation had been the amuſement of Madame de Narbonne before her new huſband became their maſter. The ſtream wound in ſome places, gently murmuring amongſt them, and in others appeared tumbling its white ſheet of foam over the bold, broken, and ſtupendous fragments of rocks that projected in different directions—heights ſo awful, accompanied by ſounds ſo various and loud, as to hold the faſcinated ſenſes enchained in ſtill amazement, at the firſt glance of objects ſo ſtrikingly grand and beautiful.

The verdant and enamelled banks of the river appeared to be joined from the oppoſite ſide by the creeping vine which hung in careleſs, but elegant feſtoons from the high branches of the trees that bent over the water, and reflected their fantaſtic forms in a thouſand moving ſhadows, as the breath of the meridian breeze lightly ſkimmed along the waving foliage.

A choſen band of muſicians, diſperſed through the foreſt at convenient diſtances, ſeemed to have the powers of harmony at command. The ſound of the French horn was prolonged by innumerable echoes, reverberating the different notes from hill to

dale, or trembling on the ſmooth ſurface of the ſtream, murmured in uniſon with its gentle and tranquil noiſe, as it glided beneath the hollow caves, or died away amongſt the more diſtant mountains.

Every change of poſition preſented a new ſcene; and the ſheet of water, that appeared as if deſcending from an immenſe arch of wood, though it might form a grander view, was not, in fact, more beautifully pictureſque than the trees and ſhrubs burſting from the pores of the ſapleſs rock, and forced to aſſume the moſt uncouth ſhapes to adopt themſelves to their ſtriking and uncommon ſituations.

In a ſmall, but romantic vale adjoining the river, and at the bottom of two foreſt-clad mountains, a temporary dancing room was erected for thoſe who preferred the humble canopy of man to the more glorious one of heaven. Acroſs this ſpot trees of the largeſt ſize inclined their aged ſummits, forming natural arches, intwined with ivy and honeyſuckle; the latter ſhedding its fragrant perfume from the branches it embraced, and hanging in careleſs feſtoons like the vines above the river. Round this building were many tents, with every variety of refreſhment that power or money could procure. The day was unuſually favourable, and the company aſſembled from all quarters:

ſimilar

ſimilar motives, of a political complexion, rather determined the generality of one party to attend this meeting, than any wiſh they felt to mix with Republican aſſociates, for the purpoſe of paying reſpect to ſuch a character as De la Ville.

As the dancing room was not much reſorted to, except by thoſe who were apprehenſive of overheating themſelves in the open air, the greater number lightly tripped it on the flowery mead.

A ſtranger coming upon them, without any prior knowledge of the ſtate of their country, would have imagined them in the boſom of peace, and gaily celebrating ſome of its principal feſtivals. —Happy nation! that can thus give way to the pleaſurable ſenſations of life, and ſport with miſery, while the demon of deſtruction, ſuſpended by a ſingle hair, is hovering above, ready to terminate your exiſtence, perhaps in the very moment of thoughtleſs and ſhort-ſighted enjoyment.

Ca ira reſounded on every ſide, and the *Marſeillois Hymn* was not forgotten.

While the firſt was playing, a group of figures, maſked like the reſt of the company, (for ſuch was the general order iſſued by the maſter of the *fête*, at the inſtigation of Marat), made their appearance through the trees, and came dancing forwards to its muſic. Their dreſs was elegant and fanciful.

They ſoon ſeparated, and mixing careleſſly among the crowd, quickly formed ſuch parties as taſte, deſign, or inclination rendered moſt ſuitable to their different views and wiſhes.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet had repaired to this theatre of mirth and folly, rather for the purpoſe of endeavouring to entertain the Counteſs with a deſcription of it afterwards, than from any great expectation of amuſement to herſelf. Her thoughts dwelt too intenſely on Madame de Narbonne's late communications, and the recent adventure in the foreſt, with its ſucceeding conſequences, to be much intereſted in any thing elſe at preſent; but however inattentive herſelf to ſurrounding circumſtances, ſuch a figure as ſhe poſſeſſed could not be eaſily overlooked by others. While engaged in a dance, in which ſhe had been forced almoſt againſt her wiſh to make one of the number, her eye caught a glance of the myſterious rock, through the thick foliage that nearly enveloped the ſtill and gloomy ſtructure. Till a mazy winding in the dance accidentally made the diſcovery, ſhe ſuſpected not it was viſible from the preſent point of view, and involuntarily felt her heart ſink at the proſpect.

Struck with the idea that perhaps at that very moment Madame de Narbonne was mournfully, and in ſolitude weeping over the painful events of former

former days, and probably drawing a ſad contraſt between paſt and preſent occurrences, unmindful of the tabor, the pipe, or the dance, ſhe ſtole off, unnoticed, to the edge of the river, and reſting her arm againſt a tree, leant her head upon it, while her eyes remained fixed upon the ſpot that had ſo unexpectedly attracted her obſervation. A tame fawn, who came up to her at this juncture, recalled her wandering thoughts by licking the diſengaged hand that careleſſly hung at her ſide. She attempted to repulſe her troubleſome companion; but finding that a more difficult taſk than at firſt ſuſpected, ſhe turned from it, to reach a ſituation freer from the chance of intruſion. Her form, her muſing attitude, and the ſtriking but ſimple elegance of her well-choſen dreſs, paſſed not unmarked; and a maſk, on ſeeing her deſign, approached to offer his aſſiſtance.

The figure of this ſtranger beſpoke youth, ſuperior rank, and manly grace in every motion; he was dreſſed in the habit of a warrior, but without any particular uniform; the National colours were faintly intermixed with the tall white plume that waved over his glittering helmet, which adding, if poſſible, to the majeſtic grandeur of his air and martial appearance, rendered him altogether a moſt intereſting object.

"Poor animal!" cried he, advancing to the fawn, and gently turning it aſide, "how I commiſerate thy fate! Who, more than thee, would willingly be drove from ſo tempting a ſituation?"

"It is but the common lot of intruders, Monſieur," replied Charlotte; "they juſtly ſuffer for their officiouſneſs."

"Heavens!" cried the gentleman, ſtarting as he ſpoke with energy, "I have heard that voice!" —Then, after a ſhort pauſe, "No, I cannot be miſtaken—it muſt be her—ah, how fortunate!"

"Quite the contrary," exclaimed a voice from behind, interrupting him; "theſe raptures are miſplaced, I promiſe you; the lady's thoughts were wandering elſewhere; they did not, I think, ſeem employed on any of the poor devils near her: ſo, Monſieur, you had better addreſs yourſelf to ſome more propitious fair one; this has a heart of ſtone, with the head of a philoſopher—too cold, Monſieur, too cold for any thing!"

The ſtranger gazed upon the perſon who thus accoſted him with an air of diſappointment and chagrin; he appeared ſolicitous to get rid of him; and while muſing on the moſt probable means of accompliſhing this, he ſaw the fawn had a ſecond time ſtole, unperceived, to the ſide of Charlotte, againſt whom it was ſoftly rubbing its head. In a moment

moment one of the branching antlers got entangled in her robe: he ſtooped to free her from the accident, and in doing ſo, a miniature picture preſented itſelf to view, hanging, ſuſpended from his neck, by a black ribbon. As he raiſed his head, Charlotte's eye caught a glance of it; no time, however, remained for examination; upon his reſuming a more erect poſition, the object of her curioſity fell back to its former place in his boſom, and before any enquiries could be made on the ſubject, he was already a few paces diſtant, and engaged in earneſt converſation with another maſk who had juſt joined him.

From this laſt perſon he ſoon turned in evident agitation, and again addreſſing her—"If, Madam, you are," ſaid he, "the lady I take you for, much depends on a few minutes' private converſation with you; at preſent, however, I ſee that is impoſſible, ſo I will releaſe you from two impertinents at leaſt." —Saying which, he caſt a ſignificant look at the firſt maſk, and gracefully bowing, *en paſſent*, ſtruck into a neighbouring path, holding the fawn by the horns, who followed him almoſt without oppoſition or conſtraint.

"Oh! for Heaven's ſake ſtop one moment!" cried Charlotte, recalled from her ſhort-lived reverie by his laſt words.—"Ah! good God, he hears me not!—Is this another illuſion of the ſenſes?

ſenſes? or was it indeed the very identical picture I ſaw?"

She gazed after him till even his ſhadow was no longer viſible, and again ſunk into deep meditation.

"Your attention ſeems ſtrangely occupied, Mademoiſelle, by the perſon who juſt now left you —ſome adventurer, I preſume. What the devil did the fellow take me for, I wonder?—I did not perfectly underſtand the parting look he gave me."

The voice in which theſe words were uttered, proved no longer fictitious; Charlotte raiſed her eyes as they reached her, and immediately recognized De la Ville for the man whoſe ill-timed and early intruſion had been the means of her diſappointment.

Vexed with his trifling impertinence, ſhe turned from him with diſguſt.

De la Ville certainly felt ſomething like a growing paſſion for the young friend of his wife, and he wiſhed to have taken this opportunity of introducing the ſubject; but the ſarcaſtic look of the ſtranger, when he wanted to appear to advantage, diſconcerted him, and Mademoiſelle de Cordet's manner did not help to reſtore his ſelf-conſequence.—It was, in fact, completely mortified.

Before he could ſufficiently recollect himſelf, a crowd was ſeen approaching, and the cry of "Make way!—room!—room!" echoed from every corner.

A ſmall

* A ſmall open carriage appeared ſhortly after; it was dragged along, in the moſt oſtentatious ſtyle, by ſome men in the National uniform, without their hats, and preceded by a party of maſks in the dreſs of dragoons, holding a chain, the other end of which was around the neck of the Imperial eagle, that had formerly ſtood on the top of the ſteeple of Namur.

The commander of the party came forwards, and, accoſting De la Ville, who was now joined by a number of the company, ſaid—" Gentlemen, *Monſeigneur l'Aigle Impériale attend vos ordres.*"

This intelligence occaſioned a variety of opinions; one maſk moved that it ſhould be placed, with the claws and beak cut off, on the top of the obeliſk erected in the middle of the park; another propoſed that it ſhould rather be hung by the legs from the ſame conſpicuous ſtation; a third deſired that the eagle ſhould be permitted to ſtand in his uſual poſture, but with the cap of liberty on his head.

Theſe witticiſms, ſuch as they were, afforded great entertainment, and produced burſts of laughter that made the foreſt ring. They danced like Baccanalians round the creſt-fallen King of the feathered race, uttering repetitions of the thouſand

* Vide Moore's Journal.

rodomontades

rodomontades ſported by the Conventional orators, accompanied with alluſions to their victories, and ſongs interlarded with the groſſeſt national flattery. The two following ſtanzas, from one much reliſhed by the people, were inceſſantly encored :—

Savez-vous la belle hiſtoire
De ces fameux Pruſſiens ?
Ils marchoient à la victoire
Avec les Autrichiens ;
Au lieu de palme de gloire
Ils ont cueilli des raiſins.

Le grand Fredéric s'échappe,
Prenant le plus court chemin ;
Mais Dumourier le retrappe,
Et lui chante ce refrain ;
N'allez plus mordre à la grappe
Dans la vigne du voiſin.

An Engliſhman, who had hitherto ſtood leaning againſt one of the temporary buildings, ſilently contemplating the ſcene before him with all the ſullen phlegm of a trueborn Briton, at length felt himſelf rouſed by ſome metaphorical abſurdity, which he imagined glanced at his own nation.—

" Is

"Is it poſſible," cried he, with a ſtern look of contempt, "is it poſſible," cried he to another who accompanied him, "that theſe are the fellows who talk of planting their national flag on the Tower of London!!—That the inexplicable current of ſucceſs which has flowed on their deſpicable Republic of late, when conteſting the matter with a ſet of ſtupid ſyſtematical Germans, might perhaps have intoxicated a people of ſoberer brains than theſe Frenchmen, I grant you; but how the devil have they the impudence to vapour about their future feats amongſt the white cliffs of Albion?—Do they think we are to be put out of our way by a ſet of ſkipping, hopping, coxcombical puppies, with their *Marſeillois Hymn*, their *Ca iras*, and their bombaſtical nonſenſe?—Damn them! they have more the appearance of a troop of bedlamites than any thing elſe!"

"Why are you ſo angry," ſaid his friend with a benignant ſmile, "becauſe others are leſs faſtidious than yourſelf?—For my part, I enjoy the happineſs of even my greateſt enemies, and almoſt envy every diſpoſition capable of extracting pleaſure from trifles, though ſurrounded with miſery."

"Confound their diſpoſition," returned the *genuine* Briton; "who the devil but yourſelf would talk of envying the inſenſibility of brutes,

or,

or, what is ſtill worſe, human creatures in the form of them!"

"It ſignifies not," anſwered the other, whoſe name was Montague, "what is the form in which contentment preſents itſelf to view: when I ſpeak of envying it, I conſider not the ſhape, but the ſenſations it is productive of. The profound philoſopher, wrapped up in the gloom of learned importance, callous to every thing but his own conſequence, and proudly ſtigmatizing every intruſive gleam of cheerful good-humour with the appellation of frivolity, appears not, in my opinion, in a more amiable dreſs, nor half ſo well calculated to encounter the viciſſitudes of life, as the gay, thoughtleſs, unconcerned multitude before us. I can only ſay that I have not found the innocent gratifications of Nature ſcattered with ſo much profuſion as to make me quarrel with their ſemblance in any not *immoral* ſituation; and I confeſs my feelings ever lead me rather to participate with thoſe of others when happy, than to grumble becauſe they are not excluſively my own."

"I ſhould readier ſubſcribe to your judgment," replied the firſt ſpeaker, "were I convinced that reality, not affectation, was at the bottom of this grimace; but do we not know that, in ſpite of ſo many ſpecious pretences of equality and fraternal-

hood,

hood, they are cutting each other's throats every day, and attempting to ſet themſelves up as umpires over all the nations round them? Under the plauſible idea of rectifying abuſes in neighbouring States, they impertinently interfere in political inſtitutions they have no buſineſs with; and while they caper about, or ſmile in your face, either rob you of your property, or knock you on the head, to ſecure your reformation more effectually! I hope, Montague, you have alſo ſomething to ſay in vindication of their ſincerity, equally good with what you have already ſported in their favour.—Ha! ha! ha!—the ſincerity of a Frenchman!—a capital ſubject for defence, faith!"

"You may laugh at the idea if you pleaſe," returned Montague; "but I can nevertheleſs defend them on that head too. My long reſidence in France has afforded me many opportunities of ſeeing the injuſtice committed by my countrymen, on the ſcore of forming raſh judgments, taken up on a ſuperficial knowledge of this nation. I do not pretend to aver that the remembrance of any merely polite profeſſions of ſervice in the common courſe of converſation, is of a very permanent nature, or perhaps extends its limits much beyond the preſent moment; but I believe they are ſincere at the time, and truly then mean to perform

perform what they ſay; nay, I have ſeldom ſeen them otherwiſe than highly gratified by having it in their power to put their offers in practice; and I entertain not the ſmalleſt doubt, but that contentment and cheerfulneſs are, generally ſpeaking, their real character, as much as it appears to be in the gay hour of feſtivity. Their paſſion for glory will afterwards, in its proper place, ſwell their hearts to attempt the attainment of ſucceſs, in what they, at leaſt, imagine a juſt cauſe; and their magnanimity, their mental and corporeal exertions will then, probably, equal, if not ſurpaſs, many of the deeds of thoſe boaſted heroes and philoſophers with whom you think them ſo unworthy to be put on a parallel."

"But can the rage for diſplaying this ſame wondrous magnanimity and corporeal exertion, vindicate their preſent hoſtile interference with their peaceable neighbours? Let them ſhew theſe qualities in their own defence, or in cutting one another's throats as much as they pleaſe; but I do not perceive what right they have to play the Quixote with thoſe who deſire not their aſſiſtance. They have ever liberty, equality, and a ſtring of damned ſtuff in their mouths, while their actions evince the ſtrongeſt inclination for obtaining univerſal dominion, by reducing the reſt of the world

world to a ſtate of ſubjection; and this they have the preſumption to ſtyle true Republicaniſm!"

"Particular circumſtances in their ſituation muſt be conſidered," ſaid Montague, "as ſome palliation of this charge; they ——"

"Particular fiddleſticks!" interrupted the other, with an air of impatience: "do you attempt to clear them from the deſign of univerſal empire, under the ſpecious pretext of viſionary rectitude, and the violated rights of mankind?—Does not the hiſtory of the world ſhew us that Republican States have been equally inſpired with the ſame deſtructive rage of conqueſt and reſtleſs ambition as ever was exhibited by any Monarchial Government from the time of Alexander the Great, to the age of Louis the Fourteenth?—And the ſpirit which the new Republic of France already begins to manifeſt, gives no reaſon to expect that the corner-ſtone of Philoſophy, from whence ſhe boaſts her origin, has taught her more moderation than her predeceſſors."

"Surely," replied Mr. Montague, "when the Convention is conſidered as maintaining the independence of their country againſt a formidable league of opponents, and undiſmayed by the idea that all the powers of Europe may join in the combination,

combination, it is impoſſible not to admire their exertions, and reſpect the fortitude they poſſeſs."

"But," cried the trueborn Engliſhman with increaſing impatience, again interrupting his antagoniſt, "but when they are ſeen behaving with haughty pride and injuſtice to a neighbouring and inoffenſive people, void of the means of reſiſtance or retaliation, and reſpectable from their talents and virtues alone, the conduct, my wiſe Sir, of your fine Convention excites, in my opinion, no very enviable ſenſation."

"You grow warm, Haſtings," ſaid the other with a ſmile; "we will change the ſubject if you pleaſe. The errors, or, if you will have it ſo, the crimes committed in different ſtages of the French Revolution, are by no means approved of by me; but I execrate rather the neceſſity of the times from which they proceed, than the unfortunate individuals who are forced to have recourſe to them."

At this inſtant Charlotte appeared, croſſing the ſide of the tent where the two diſputants were ſtanding; three other ladies and a gentleman accompanied her.

One of the female maſks, to whom Montague was known, gaily accoſted him as he bowed to her. —"What, Monſieur," cried ſhe, "diſcourſing on

on politics, *a la-mode d'Anglois*, in the midſt of feſtivity! You ſentimental Engliſhmen are ſo faſcinated with that foe to pleaſure, "old Care," under the guiſe of philoſophy, that he is ever intruding upon you *m l-a-propos*. I preſume you have ſettled the fate of Kingdoms and Republics with all the profound ſolemnity of your national character, while we have been no leſs buſily employed in paſſing ſentence on the repreſentation of—an eagle!"

"Why, faith!" ſaid Montague, laughing, "I believe our diſcuſſion of both ſubjects will be pretty much on a par a hundred years hence, whatever may be the different light in which it appears to us at preſent."

"*Bon!*" exclaimed the lady: "once more *a-la-mode d'Anglois* is diſcoverable in that reflection; for my part, the innocent enjoyment of the good things to be met with in this little world, at preſent, is of infinite more conſequence to me than all the affairs of the univerſe a century afterwards:—to illuſtrate which, (as I may not be able to make the enquiry at that period), tell me, if you can, who is the handſome fellow—yonder, ſee! walking arm in arm with a perſon in the National uniform! They ſeem in earneſt converſation, and inattentive to every thing around them.—What a graceful figure!—

figure!—What a noble mien!" continued ſhe, as they paſſed within a few ſteps of her party.—The energy with which ſhe ſpoke, turned Charlotte's obſervation on the ſubject of her eulogium.

It was the identical ſtranger ſhe had lately been ſo much intereſted in.

He ſaw her not, however; but ſlightly bowing, proceeded onwards.

"Heavens! what an elegant, but what an inſenſible creature!" cried the lady, in a tone of diſappointment. "But Charlotte, my dear Charlotte, theſe Engliſhmen have infected you, I doubt;—what are you meditating upon, child?—This ſame *ignis fatuus* has attracted more attention than mine, I ſee, if I may judge by the direction of your eyes."

"Not at all," replied Charlotte, withdrawing them; "I was only thinking of ſome beautiful lines written by a Scots poet, which ſtruck me as peculiarly deſcriptive of circumſtances one frequently meets with; but a repetition from me would only injure them, as I am not enough miſtreſs of the language to do them juſtice."

"Oh!" cried Montague, "I recollect them perfectly—I think I do; every country muſt be ſenſible to the force of true genuine deſcription, in whatever language it approaches them.

"Or

" Or like the ſnowfalls on the river,
" A moment white—then melts for ever;
" Or, like the Borealis race,
" That flit ere you can point their place;
" Or, like the rainbow's lovely form,
" Evaniſhing amid the ſtorm*."

" I juſt underſtand ſo much of Engliſh," ſaid the other lady, " as to comprehend the beauty of your quotation; but its preſent application appears as unintelligible as if that had not been the caſe; and it might as well have been written in the Eſquimaux tongue for any alluſion I can perceive to the ſubject which introduced it."

" You are miſtaken, however," thought Charlotte.

The remark, nevertheleſs, hurt her; it looked as if ſhe had unconſciouſly led to a diſcovery of ſentiments, which, in fact, ſhe was guiltleſs of entertaining for the perſon whoſe ſudden diſappearance had brought the above lines to remembrance: and yet, undefinable as the idea ſecretly appeared, ſhe certainly wiſhed he had not left them ſo quickly.

The obſervation of his female friend, with the agitation it cauſed in her to whom it was addreſſed,

* Burns's Poems.

did not eſcape Montague; he turned an enquiring eye on Charlotte, with whom he was but little acquainted, and was not leſs ſtruck by her manner, than the penſive look with which ſhe followed the ſteps of the ſtranger;—this, joined to the lines which had ſo critically occurred on his paſſing her, ſeemed to imply ſome concealment of conſequence. The few times he had met with her at Clermont had given him ſo high an opinion of her mental abilities, that he was convinced no trifling conſideration could thus throw her off her guard, or deprive her of that ſelf-command which he had often remarked in her character with admiration. The gentleman, who at firſt accompanied the ladies, had walked away with a fellow Republican, who accoſting him by the familiar appellation of—"*Citoyen Soldat*," requeſted to ſpeak with him.—Montague therefore propoſed a ſtroll through the grove; and after introducing his countryman to the ladies, they ſet all off together. Haſtings ſeemed more than uſually pleaſed with Charlotte, who alone, of all the fluttering females around, appeared to have the power of inſpiring him with complacency for any thing that was connected with Republicaniſm. Their courſe was left to chance, which inſenſibly led them to the quarter where the myſterious ſtranger again became viſible. He was now alone at a diſtance,

and

and apparently buried in thought: he held ſomething in his hand on which his whole attention was rivetted; and without once raiſing his head, a ſecond time diſappeared amongſt the gloomy ſhades of the foreſt.

Montague ſlily repeated the former lines, and caſt a ſignificant glance at Mademoiſelle de Cordet. Guilt is not always the ſole cauſe that produces a ſuffuſion of countenance. The pride of indignant worth, when conſcious of meeting with unmerited ſuſpicion, will ſometimes cloath the cheek of true delicacy in a ſimilar uniform.

Hence ſuperficial obſervers frequently confound innocence and error with each other. The ſenſitive plant equally ſhrinks from the indiſcriminating touch of vice or virtue.

Charlotte felt the force of Montague's application, and her feelings were mortified by the inſinuation it conveyed. The implied imputation ſhe knew herſelf unentitled to deſerve; but the crimſon hue that ſpread its deepening ſhade over her glowing features, was not very well calculated to aſſiſt in refuting the charge. She once raiſed her eyes, however, with that intention: they met thoſe of her accuſer, ſteadily regarding her with a look that ſeemed to ſay—"It is certainly ſo!" and ſhe dropped her deſign in confuſion. Abſent and

inattentive, ſhe no longer joined in the converſation; and Haſtings began to think he had been too premature in forming his opinion of her mental ſuperiority, which he was now inclined to place on a level with the reſt of her verſatile countrywomen.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

" I hold thee baſe enough
" To break through law, and ſpurn at ſacred order,
" And do a brutal injury like this."

ROWE.

WHILE increaſing diſlike to his company operated as uſual on the faſtidious diſpoſition of the Engliſhman, and had already reduced his part of the converſation to ſhort and ſullen monoſyllables, the unconſcious cauſe of it walked ſilently by his ſide, reflecting on the ill-grounded ſuſpicions her conduct had occaſioned—on the unaccountable words uttered by the ſtranger when he diſappeared with the fawn, and the vexatious circumſtances which had ſince occurred to prevent her obtaining

an explanation of them.—The picture too! what could ſhe—what was ſhe to think of it?—Heavens! ſhould it prove the one whoſe loſs had been the cauſe of ſo much uneaſineſs to her beloved Counteſs!—But, no! that could not be the caſe!—at leaſt ſhe feared ſo;—though, were it even otherwiſe, how was ſhe to arrive at the knowledge of it? Accoſt a ſtranger on ſuch a ſubject, and demand to ſee a cheriſhed miniature, which he wore in his boſom, and perhaps wiſhed to keep in concealment? —Impoſſible!—A proceeding ſo indelicate would well merit the higheſt reprobation! Were ſhe, indeed, certain it was the painting in queſtion, much might be attempted to gratify Madame de Narbonne: then the caſe would be conſiderably altered; but without ſuch a foundation to go upon, what was to be done? If it was one and the ſame picture, many corroborating circumſtances evinced its great conſequence to both parties; and a *public* inveſtigation of the fact might therefore be productive of diſagreeable effects. She recollected the Counteſs's injunctions to avoid making any ſuch enquiries; and the parting words of the ſtranger ſeemed to contain the ſame myſterious caution. To put her conjectures into language, or requeſt aſſiſtance towards developing them, was not of courſe to be hazarded; and every ſcheme, rejected

rejected as ſoon as formed, ended ſtill in the unſatisfactory ſelf-aſked query of—"What is then to be done?"

"That gentleman would be a fine figure," ſaid one of her female companions, "were he not too tall:—don't you think ſo?" added ſhe, patting the maſk with her fan who attended her, and who was rather below the middle ſize himſelf. He appealed to Charlotte for her opinion; and it was not till he repeated the queſtion a ſecond time, that ſhe recalled her wandering ideas, and raiſed her eyes from the ground to anſwer him.

Again they encountered the object of her curioſity: but he was not now alone; a lady hung upon his arm, who appeared to occupy his whole attention.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſtarted at the ſight, and almoſt immediately ſunk into her former train of thought.

Teazed by the queſtions of the little maſk, who, at his fair companion's inſtigation, continued to importune her for her opinion on the ſtranger's ſize, Charlotte was once more rouſed from reflection; but heedleſs of what had paſſed, though anxious to conceal her inattention, ſhe replied, in a voice that plainly indicated her thoughts were occupied on another ſubject, that Maximinius, the Emperor,

was nine feet high, and in the reign of Auguſtus other perſons were mentioned to have been as tall.

"Maximinius and Auguſtus!" exclaimed one of the ladies, laughing moſt immoderately.—"Maximinius and Auguſtus truly! Truſt me, my dear, the period of tall *ſoi-diſant* heroes of this claſs is verging to a cloſe: the equalizing ſyſtem has curtailed their greatneſs, and brought them to a natural level with their fellow-mortals."

"Your female philoſophers," ſaid Haſtings, turning with a ſarcaſtic ſmile to his friend Montague—"your female philoſophers of this country ſeem expert at mixtures; they have an excellent faculty at jumbling ſenſe and folly, levity and thought together."

"And why not?" retorted the lady with quickneſs, as ſhe accidentally overheard his remark: "does not true philoſophy conſiſt in knowing and practiſing whatever is moſt conducive to terreſtrial happineſs, and cheerful contentment of mind?—And is our portion of the firſt ſo very copious, pray, that we may ſtrip it of all its harmleſs auxiliaries, and yet find enough remaining to ſatisfy our wiſhes? *Ah pauvre Jean Angloiſe!* believe me, not even your own boaſted iſland is ſufficiently gifted by the forming hand of Providence for ſuch an experiment! Trifles compoſe the common occurrences

occurrences of life, and real wiſdom conſiſts in ſo managing theſe ſame trifles, as to make them aiding and aſſiſting to the great object in view—univerſal ſatisfaction of mind! Happineſs is a compound word, of which a light heart and a clear conſcience are the baſis: none but thoſe who poſſeſs the two latter can properly be ſaid to enjoy the former:—*ergo*, to be happy then is to be virtuous, and the happy, you know, muſt conſequently be cheerful. It follows of courſe that we are good as angels, ſince our nation is not generally allowed to be overburthened with ſombre reflection, or a taſte for the melancholy. But though a light heart and a clear conſcience are the baſis of happineſs, yet it muſt be granted that there are many additional compoſitions requiſite to perfect and continue the ſtructure;—thus we dance, we ſing, and endeavour by every innocent contrivance to ſuſtain our ſpirits amidſt the devaſtations of war, and rumours of war, inſtead of mourning over evils not at preſent to be avoided:—we do more, we try to ſupport them with good humour and fortitude; convinced that were we to ſit down, under the influence of the blue devils, and bite our fingers till they bled again, matters might reaſonably be expected to grow worſe, but could never be altered by that means for the better; whereas, by nouriſhing an active

diſpoſition, the mind is kept awake and vigorous, ready to ſeize every favourable opportunity that may prove ſerviceable to the grand cauſe of univerſal liberty. Now pray, *Monſieur L'Angloiſe*, don't you think this as rational a ſyſtem, and *rather more pleaſant* than hanging or drowning yourſelf, becauſe the wind blows from the Eaſt, or you have diſcovered that this world was not made to play life's game of chance juſt as you wiſhed it?"

"Well argued, faith!" cried Haſtings, humouroufly bowing, "well argued, faith! and with the ſolidity of a female caſuiſt. Confeſs, my fair antagoniſt, have you not a deſign to ſhew me that the petticoat philoſophers of England are ſurpaſſed by the daughters of the new Republic, in *ſound reaſoning*, *depth of thought*, and the—what ſhall I call it—*art of inveſtigation?*"

"No, Sir!" replied the lady, ſomewhat piqued at the tone of ridicule he addreſſed her in; "I ſpeak from my own feelings, and a knowledge of national character derived from obſervation. I have been in England, Sir; and though I greatly reſpect many individuals of that country, yet I cannot by any means allow you to be all ſages of the very firſt water; though," continued ſhe, again laughing immoderately, "I bow to the important value of your ſubjects, and admit they well merit the

minute

minute and learned diſcuſſions beſtowed upon them; *there*, at leaſt, you certainly deſerve the appellation of *unique*, ſuperior to any other nation in the univerſe. What think you, gentlemen and ladies," ſaid ſhe, turning with an arch expreſſion of countenance to the reſt of the party; "what think you was the theme of ſerious inveſtigation, during a long winter's evening, in a large company where I was viſiting in Monſieur's ſentimental iſland of deep philoſophers?—* Why truly, which was preferable, the *thigh or breaſt of a woodcock!!!* I cannot ſay on which ſide the ſcale of wiſdom would have preponderated, for the viſiters departed without coming to any poſitive concluſion. The caſe was, no doubt, of too much conſequence to be haſtily determined; and it was therefore reſerved to ſome future opportunity, that they might again have the pleaſure of living over, in idea, the delicate morſels furniſhed by the poor little creature."

The riſibility this Engliſh anecdote occaſioned proved irreſiſtible, and Haſtings himſelf was unable to withſtand its force. At firſt, however, he ſeemed rather uncertain whether to be pleaſed, or otherwiſe: the ſtory appeared to bear a little too hard on the chapter of national epicuriſm; but at

* A real fact.

length his natural ſenſe and good temper carried the day, and Madame D'Orvillat, the hiſtorigrapher of the woodcock's capabilities, became a particular favourite with him ever after.

The moſt trifling topic may ſometimes be of conſequence from its effects: this was the caſe at preſent;—Madame D'Orvillat's volubility ſupplied time for reflection; and ſenſible of the error her inattention had given riſe to, Charlotte reſolved to be leſs heedleſs in future. In purſuance of this determination, ſhe once more joined in the converſation; and had juſt got into a ſpirited argument with Haſtings on the ſuperiority of a Republican to a Monarchial form of government, when the diſpute was interrupted by an appearance of buſtle and agitation on the other ſide of the park; and immediately after an indiſtinct rumour reached them of an inſult having been offered to ſome of the company, though by whom was unknown.

In a moment all flew to the ſpot from whence it proceeded. No intelligence, however, of an explanatory nature could be procured; all was noiſe and confuſion; a thouſand different accounts were circulated, but each of them too contradictory and abſurd to gain credit: one inſtant it was ſaid the Chouans had broke into the Caſtle, and plundered it;

it; at another, that Charette was approaching, and one of his ſpies had narrowly eſcaped being ſeized; a third report affirmed that an attempt had been made to carry off Madame de Narbonne, who, after being forced to ſome diſtance, had been happily reſcued, and conducted back to the Caſtle.

Charlotte ſcarcely waited to hear the concluſion of this laſt alarming information; ſhe caught hold of Montague's arm, and entreated him to accompany her through the ſhrubbery.

On entering the Caſtle, the firſt object that met her view was Madame de Narbonne's maid in a fainting fit; her dreſs was ſo ſimilar to her Lady's, that had not ſome part of it been removed to give her air, Charlotte might eaſily have remained deceived by her appearance.

Her anxiety, however, was ſoon relieved by the by-ſtanders, who unanimouſly aſſured her that Madame had ſuffered nothing, whatever her maid might have done. The latter now opened her eyes, but gave a faint ſcream, and immediately relapſed again when ſhe obſerved Mademoiſelle de Cordet ſtanding before her. In this ſtate ſhe continued for ſome time, without being able to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to any of the many queſtions required of her.

Finding her preſence of no avail, and ſolicitous to learn what was really become of the Counteſs, Charlotte committed the care of the invalid to thoſe domeſtics who were preſent; and requeſting Mr. Montague to remain in an adjoining room, haſtened to the range of apartments uſually occupied by the Lady of the Caſtle:—there all ſeemed deſerted and ſtill; the doors were locked; no admittance could be obtained, nor the ſmalleſt notice taken of her attempts for that purpoſe! Uncertain what to think, and trembling with unknown apprehenſions for the ſituation of her friend, ſhe returned to Montague, and was relating her diſappointment, with the diſagreeable ſuſpicions it gave riſe to, when a ſervant haſtily entered, and entreated ſhe would have the goodneſs to reviſit Mademoiſelle Jacqueline, who was now tolerably recovered from her fainting fits, and had repeatedly deſired to ſee her.

Jacqueline ſeemed abaſhed at her approach, caſt down her eyes, and appeared irreſolute how to proceed. At length Charlotte's energetic demands reſpecting the fate of her Lady, fixed her wavering intentions. She requeſted to be left alone with Mademoiſelle, and inſtantly dropping on her knees, implored her forgiveneſs, ere ſhe endeavoured to unburthen

unburthen her mind, or account for the cauſe of her recent indiſpoſition.

"Is it a committed or premeditated crime you have to diſcloſe?" aſked Charlotte.

"Neither, Mademoiſelle," replied the girl, rather ſtartled at Charlotte's look and manner; "my confeſſion amounts not to criminality, though I grant what I have to diſcloſe is highly reprehenſible: in ſhort, Mademoiſelle, my Lady ordered me to obſerve if there was any perſon in her favourite walks;—this was about an hour or two ago—perhaps more, for I cannot now be certain. I ſoon, however, ſatisfied her on that head, and ſhe then deſired me to accompany her to the ſummer-houſe near the rock. I obeyed, and remained with her for a few minutes. At laſt ſhe remarked that there appeared no chance of being interrupted by any of the ſtraggling parties, who were gueſts, on this day of public feſtivity, at the Caſtle; I might therefore, ſhe ſaid, return, and inform thoſe who choſe to enquire for her (if ſuch there were), that indiſpoſition required retirement, and prevented her ſeeing viſiters. I knew my Lady meant to continue there for ſome time, as ſhe mentioned the period at which my attendance was required again. A thought ſtruck me, a fooliſh one it was, and as dearly have I paid for it—it ſtruck me that I ſhould like

like to ſee what was going on in the park and foreſt; but Madame had poſitively ordered me not to quit her antichamber, conſequently I durſt not appear in my own dreſs. I had been making ſome alterations in this, and ſo the ſilly idea came into my mind that I would maſquerade it like my betters. The robe had not been often worn by the Counteſs, ſo I preſumed my maſter would not recollect it; but even were that the caſe, I imagined he would not be diſpleaſed at the fancy, ſince it was agreeable to the ſyſtem of equality he is continually inculcating to all around him:—as for a maſk, as the devil would have it, to make the temptation ſtronger, I had noticed two or three left in an adjoining apartment, and ſoon had the folly to equip myſelf for the intended exhibition.

"Anxious to avoid meeting with any of the domeſtics, whoſe knowledge of me might be productive of a diſcovery, I ventured not to quit the Caſtle by any of the uſual paſſages, but ſecretly explored my way through the covered path leading from my Lady's apartments, which at length brought me to the corner of the park, where you turn down to the river. The Counteſs, you know, Mademoiſelle, walks often in that direction. This circumſtance further aſſiſted my deſign, becauſe if taken for my Lady by any of the viſiters, I ſhould meet

meet with more reſpect, and run leſs chance of obſervation. The trees there are very cloſe too, and I flattered myſelf I had left the Caſtle unperceived; but juſt as I reached this ſpot, three men, who, it ſeems, had watched my ſteps, ſuddenly accoſted me. Taking them for ſome of the company, as they were maſked, I inconſiderately chatted away with them, and ſtill more inconſiderately walked on, without noticing that we were pretty far advanced in the foreſt, till one of them ſaid ſomething in a whiſper to his companion, who had fallen a little behind us. I now looked round, and obſerving we had wandered to a diſtance, propoſed joining the other gueſts, whom we had almoſt loſt ſight of. Scarcely had the propoſal paſſed my lips, ere I felt my arms ſeized, and an attempt made to force me onwards!

"Terrified at the action, I ſcreamed, and enquired in the utmoſt trepidation what was meant to be done with me, or why I was thus treated? Whether ſurpriſe had betrayed my real voice to them (for hitherto I had imitated my Lady's), or that I ſpoke in a manner which was conſtrued into a tone of haughtineſs, I know not; but the ſneering ſtyle in which they anſwered me, and the jargon they talked about equality, will make me hate the word, I am ſure, as long as I live, and has cured me of

of every wiſh for putting myſelf on a footing with my ſuperiors in future.

" Well, amidſt all my apprehenſions a thought however occurred, that if they ſuſpected me for the Counteſs, I ſhould meet with more reſpectful uſage. So ſays I, 'Unhand me, fellows!—Do you know who I am?'

'Aye, ſure enough we do,' replied one of the number; 'poor devils like us have too long known, to our coſt, what materials the great are compoſed of: day and day about is fair play, however, and now it is our turn to lord it. But why waſte words? Let us haſten to our employer; he has long been impatient for our return.'

'Stay,' cried the other two in a breath, 'we muſt prevent our charge from making too much noiſe: here is a cambric handkerchief he gave us, to keep her mouth from catching cold, in caſe ſhe ſhould be diſpoſed to aſſert the privilege of Nobility, by exerting her pretty voice a little too much for the preſent occaſion. Come, come, *Madame la Compteſs*, you ſee a certain friend of your's is attentive to your eaſe by providing ſo ſoft an application;" and he began to fold the handkerchief for its intended purpoſe.

" I now plainly found I was ſeriouſly taken for my Lady, that ſhe was the perſon they had received orders

orders to ſeize, and that, in ſhort, my ſilly attempts to paſs for her had reduced me to the preſent dangerous predicament. This knowledge made me hope to regain my liberty when the truth was diſcovered. Juſt as the handkerchief was therefore approaching my mouth, I ſcreamed out a confeſſion of the fact, proteſting with many aſſeverations that I was not Madame de Narbonne, and imploring their forbearance.

"The brutes rudely laughed at the aſſertion, replied they knew better, and began to force the bandage over my mouth. I ſtruggled violently to evade their intention, and in doing ſo my maſk fell off. Scarcely had it reached the ground, when the fellow who was tying my hands, looked up, and ſtarting back, with a tremendous oath ſwore they were all in the wrong box, for ſure enough this was not Madame, but only one of the *ſoi-diſant* Nobility of the ſecond claſs, one of the apes of quality, who nevertheleſs merited puniſhment for wiſhing to tread in the ſteps of that contemptible order."

"Well, well," cried Charlotte, interrupting the prolix narrator, "you need not be ſo minute in your repetitions; come to the point, I entreat you —I die to hear what follows."

"Why, Mademoiſelle," replied Jacqueline, "I only ſay what they ſaid; and you bade me be particular,

particular, that you might better know what concluſion to draw from the whole; but, as I was going to tell you, they now retreated to a little diſtance, to conſult on their next meaſures, I ſuppoſe: be that as it may, though my hands were ſecured, I knew my feet were at liberty, and I began to uſe them pretty freely without thinking it neceſſary to bid my companions adieu. But, alas! though fear is ſaid to give wings, mine were not ſtrong enough to carry me far, for I was ſoon overtaken; and, to be ſure, many a diſmal pinch and gripe they gave me;—the marks are ſtill to be ſeen on my ſhoulders, I believe.

"I was now in a worſe condition than ever; and many dreadful imprecations were poured on my head if I did not inſtantly diſcover where my Lady then was, for they ſeemed to know of her not being in the Caſtle."

"Good God!" again interrupted Charlotte; "and did you tell them? Haſten, for Heaven's ſake, to remove the horrid apprehenſions that terrify me;—did you tell them?"

"*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiſelle!" returned Jacqueline, "what could I do? I was threatened and ſhook, and ſhook and threatened, till I hardly knew what I was about; and, perhaps, in the dread of what would befal me, I might have dropped ſome unlucky

unlucky word or other;—I cannot anſwer for myſelf, Mademoiſelle;—fortunately they had not yet accompliſhed their deſign of ſtopping my mouth: this was no doubt delayed in expectation of receiving a ſatisfactory anſwer to their queſtions reſpecting the Counteſs. The criſis of my fate approached; and Providence mercifully turned the balance in my favour, by ſending a protecting angel to ſhield me from further evil or moleſtation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

" 'Tis he!—that ſprite's illuſive gueſt,
(" Ah me! that ſprites can fate controul!)
" That lives ſtill imag'd on her breaſt,
" That lives ſtill pictur'd in her ſoul."

LANGHORNE.

" AT this moment," continued Jacqueline, " juſt as they were dragging me farther into the foreſt, I caught a glimpſe of ſome perſon through the trees. The ſcream I inſtantly uttered was ſudden, ſhrill, and unlooked-for. I had even time to repeat it, before a violent blow on my breaſt reduced the ſound of my voice to a hollow groan. The ſtranger, however, heard me, and his eyes were attracted to the ſpot. He pronounced ſome-

thing

thing aloud; a watch-word, I preſume, for immediately two or three men appeared at a diſtance, while he himſelf, ſpringing forward with the rapidity of an arrow from a bow, ſtruck one of the fellows down with the handle of his ſword, and then ſnatching it from the ſcabbard, quickly laid another of them motionleſs at his feet, juſt as the wretch aimed his piſtol at my deliverer, which happily flaſhed in the pan without going off.

'Secure that ruffian!' cried the brave man to one of his friends, who approached, as the remaining aſſaſſin was ſculking amongſt the underwood to eſcape obſervation. Then turning to me, he untied my hands, ſet me once more at liberty, and in the moſt ſoothing accents entreated I would be compoſed, and recollect myſelf: for indeed, Mademoiſelle, I was now almoſt as wild with joy as I had recently been from terror; and repeatedly did I thank my generous preſerver for his timely interference, which probably ſaved more lives, for the villains certainly wanted to murder my Lady;—and you know, Mademoiſelle, life is precious, every one wiſhes to lengthen their own: it is therefore hard to ſay what might have been the conſequence had they threatened me out of my ſenſes. My Lady is a good Lady, and I would ſuffer much to

ſerve

ſerve her: but ſtill exiſtence is precious, and one is apt to conſider themſelves in the firſt inſtance."

Jacqueline's mode of reaſoning was neither new nor hyperbolical. It has too frequently been reduced to practice amongſt the prudent inhabitants of this diſintereſted world, to be diſputed by the humble writer of theſe pages: experience and veracity would fail her in the attempt; for, alas! ſhe is fatally authoriſed to ſay, that the ties of conſanguinity and natural affection are inadequate to contend with determined prejudice, or the feelings of a ſelfiſh diſpoſition!

However, according to Mr. Pope's axiom, "whatever is, is right." In a happier ſtate the truth of this aſſertion will doubtleſſly be better elucidated; at preſent we muſt take it for granted, and ſubmit to what we are incapable of controverting—the myſterious, but unerring diſpenſations of Providence!

My readers will have the goodneſs to pardon this digreſſion—it is certainly ill-timed; but what ſwells the heart, will ſometimes improperly burſt from its lacerated boundaries, and the impulſive motion is then apt to guide the pen in uniſon with the ſenſation of the moment.

Jacqueline was proceeding with her harangue on the ruling motive of ſelf-preſervation, when Charlotte

Charlotte again ſtopped her ſhort, by enquiring what became of the ruffians, and whether any of them made their eſcape.

"Yes, Mademoiſelle," ſhe replied, "one of the number contrived to ſteal off, another was ſecured, and as for the third, why I think he will ſcarcely ſeek adventures in the foreſt again.—My brave deliverer has ſaved him that trouble;—he has got enough of levelling, I'll warrant him."

"How unlucky," cried Charlotte, "that any of them ſhould have found means to get away unpuniſhed! Are you certain they have no knowledge of the Counteſs's retreat?"

"Why, Mademoiſelle, I cannot ſwear to that circumſtance: however, I directed my noble preſerver towards the path where it was moſt likely Madame would be met with; I told him my fears for her ſafety, and entreated he would haſten to protect her, if neceſſary. A ſecond requeſt was needleſs; he ordered the priſoner to be taken to a place of ſecurity, and directed me to be conducted home by ſome of the people whom he had ſummoned in the foreſt. As my ſpirits ſubſided, I fell into violent fainting fits, but not before I remarked the manly form and fine harmonious voice of him to whom I am ſo infinitely indebted. Oh Mademoiſelle! had you but ſeen his graceful figure—ſo gentle, yet ſo

fearleſs!—ſo ſuperior in appearance, and ſo condeſcending in manners! Why, though he knew I was not my Lady, he paid me as much reſpect and attention as if ſhe herſelf had been preſent, and the principal ſufferer! Indeed, I ſometimes fancied he reſembled Madame—and then he ſpoke ſo like her too! Oh dear! was it not ſtrange?—But this muſt have been merely the force of imagination, for my head is ſtill much diſordered; otherwiſe, Mademoiſelle, tedious as you may have thought me, I dare ſay I could yet tell you more."

"I do not, however, wiſh to hear it at preſent," ſaid Charlotte, rather impatiently; "inform me quickly of what you further know reſpecting the Counteſs."

"*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiſelle! I have already mentioned every thing in my power on that ſubject; I am perſuaded Madame runs no hazard: it ſtill wants ſome time of the period fixed upon for my attendance; and, beſides, ſhe muſt be in ſafety with ſuch a guard as I ſent for her protection. Lord help me! ſure I tremble at the very idea of her preſence! Do, Mademoiſelle, plead for me! You have more to ſay with her than any other perſon. Oh my poor head, how confuſed it is!"

"We ſhall conſider of your buſineſs hereafter," replied Charlotte; "at preſent the worſt muſt be provided

provided againſt in another quarter. The ambiguity of your expreſſions alarms me; and I dread the extent of information thoſe ruffians may have obtained. Try, nevertheleſs, to compoſe yourſelf: we will not acquaint the Counteſs with more of your adventures than is abſolutely requiſite to prepare her for ſelf-preſervation hereafter. I will return to you by and by; at preſent I leave you to reflect on the folly and danger of ſtepping aſide from the path Providence has aſſigned as your proper ſtation; let the miſchiefs you have now eſcaped be held in remembrance, and may they prove a leſſon for your future conduct!"

Jacqueline ſobbed, made a thouſand profeſſions of ſorrow for her errors, and ſeemed inclined to ſeal the whole with another hyſterical exhibition. But Mademoiſelle de Cordet had made ſome obſervations which raiſed a ſuſpicion of her ſincerity: ſhe thought there appeared to be more the affectation, than reality of contrition, and haſtily left her to ſeek Mr. Montague.

To him ſhe briefly related the amount of her intelligence, and the cauſe of thoſe apprehenſions it produced. He perfectly agreed in the propriety of attending to Madame de Narbonne's ſafety, and coincided in her opinion of De la Ville's villanous deſigns, who, from many late corroborating cir-

cumſtances, they both concluded was the private ſource of the recent tranſaction in the foreſt.

The devil himſelf, however, may ſometimes be falſely accuſed: De la Ville was not quite ſo bad as they imagined. It is poſſible to be weak without being decidedly wicked; though vicious aſſociates generally unite them at laſt in one copartnerſhip.—He was guiltleſs, nevertheleſs, in this inſtance.

Though hitherto not perſonally much acquainted with Montague, Charlotte was not ignorant of his real character and principles; on theſe ſhe knew the firmeſt dependance might ſafely be placed, and ſhe heſitated not to put them now to the teſt. To meet with M. de Clermont was nevertheleſs a matter ſhe was particularly ſolicitous to accompliſh; but time would elapſe in the ſearch, and it was too precious to be loſt at this juncture.

At length it was determined to diſpatch a truſty meſſenger in purſuit of him, and haſten onwards themſelves to the neighbourhood of the receſs.

On entering the court, however, they fortunately met the perſon they were in queſt of, accompanied by one or two more of their friends, whom curioſity, and the vague reports in circulation, had drawn to the Caſtle.

Mademoiſelle

Mademoiſelle de Cordet conducted them down the path ſhe had uſually ſeen the Counteſs purſue, till the vicinity of her retreat was in ſight; there they cautiouſly explored around them, and continued to walk through the different windings in expectation of Madame de Narbonne's appearance.

In the meanwhile a number of maſks had aſſembled at the Caſtle, to learn if there was any foundation for the various rumours prevalent amongſt the company; but the ſervants either were, or pretended to be ignorant of Jacqueline's real adventure, and they knew perfectly well that no violence of any kind had been offered to the Houſe. Enquiries therefore proved ineffectual, and curioſity ungratified. The viſiters returned to the ſcene of amuſement without receiving any ſatisfactory intelligence, but fully convinced the numerous ſurmiſes they heard, proceeded not from any thing that had happened in that quarter.

Every ſuſpicious occurrence is to be feared where the demon of civil war is raging. De la Ville had ſufficient ſenſe to know that a change in the reigning powers might prove fatal to his proſpects of aggrandizement: he took the alarm, and was hurrying acroſs the park amongſt others; not from anxiety for the fate of the Counteſs, but merely to learn the truth, with a view to provide

for his own perſonal ſafety, ſhould the extent of his apprehenſions be verified. Before he reached the principal gate, Auſtin Marat met him as if returning from the Caſtle. To a leſs ſuperficial obſerver traits of remaining chagrin might have been traced on his countenance, even under the great appearance of good humour his pliant features exhibited. But De la Ville was not much celebrated for his ſkill in phyſiognomy; the ſmall ſhare of penetration he uſually poſſeſſed, ſeldom enabled him to reach beyond the firſt ſurface of occurrences.

Auſtin gaily caught hold of his arm, and turned him back again; then burſting into a loud and immoderate fit of laughter, ſuddenly ſtopped, under pretence of having exhauſted himſelf.

De la Ville, retiring a few paces, looked at him with aſtoniſhment, and repeatedly demanded the meaning of his mirthful mood, without receiving any other anſwer than a freſh note of the ſame tune.

At length, with apparent difficulty, he compoſed himſelf ſufficiently to inform his ſtaring auditor that one of Madame de Narbonne's maids, being ſeized with the *quality mania*, had equipped herſelf to play *my Lady*; and under the diſguiſe was performing her part *a la merveille*, when unfortunately ſhe happened to be recognized by ſome merry fellows,

fellows, who knowing the girl's vanity, determined to have a little amuſement with it: with this in view, they inſenſibly proceeded to a diſtance from the reſt of the company without perceiving it. Mademoiſelle had been equally inattentive to time or place; for ſhe was now wound up to the firſt rank of Nobility by the copious portion of adulation beſtowed upon her, and actually imagined herſelf transformed to the real character ſhe only perſonated. Her gallants, however, tired of the firſt act of the farce, began to prepare for the ſecond, and mock reſpect gradually gave way to more familiar treatment. One of them, ſomewhat too rough, I preſume, in his badinage, gave the *ſoi-diſant* Counteſs offence: he was not intimidated, nevertheleſs, but perſevered in the ſame line of conduct. This ſhe reſented, thinking it, no doubt, incompatible with her new-acquired dignity, and, of courſe, ſqualled aloud, ſo as to attract the notice of ſome little pert coxcomb, who wiſhed to play the hero for once in his life. To him ſhe related a long rigmarole ſtory of ill uſage, and an imaginary deſign of running away with her.—Yes, faith! running away with her!—Ha! ha! ha! But, as I was ſaying, *my* —— *parbleu!* I mean the young men, whoſe frolic had occaſioned this idea, were going to explain the whole affair, when

the hot-headed fellow knocked one of them down, and ſoon after ſent another the ſame way to keep his companion company; report ſays the laſt fell too hard to riſe again: this is all I know of the matter, and the mighty ſource of the preſent buſtle and confuſion.—Ha! ha! ha! can any thing be more ridiculous? Mankind is a ſtrange compound animal, and capable of ſwallowing any abſurdity whatever; had you but heard the various rumours, the nonſenſical concluſions this ſilly girl's vanity has given birth to, like me, you would have exhauſted yourſelf with laughing.

Marat then related a number of riſible anecdotes occaſioned by this event, which ſoon produced a ſimilar effect on his hearer; and they croſſed the park arm in arm together, with peals of laughter burſting from them at intervals that echoed through the foreſt as they moved along.

There is an old proverb which tells us that "fools were made for knaves;" and old proverbs are ſaid to be founded on obſervation and experience.

Why ſuch an order of things ſhould, however, exiſt, appears to me, I confeſs, incomprehenſible; I cannot poſſibly convince myſelf that a wiſe and benevolent Being would form a creation ſo oppoſite in intellects, merely that the weaker party might become

become a prey to the ſtronger and more vicious. This is at once making Providence the ſource of injuſtice and evil; a ſuppoſition no thinking mind can give even a momentary ſanction to, becauſe every circumſtance around us exhibits proofs to the contrary, and completely contradicts the impious aſſertion. Old proverbs therefore are not always founded on real obſervation and experience.

In the preſent inſtance, at leaſt, they happen to be both on the other ſide of the queſtion.

Auſtin Marat was, nevertheleſs, inclined to aſcertain the fact practically, though he felt no riſing wiſh to controvert the truth of the ancient adage.

How he became ſo well informed on a ſubject as yet impenetrable to others, or why he treated it in this ludicrous manner, may perhaps be explained hereafter.

Jacqueline in her confuſion had neglected to mention one neceſſary piece of intelligence.

The Counteſs, it ſeems, from motives of caution, had taken a different and more private path to the receſs than the uſual one that commonly led to it.

The girl, however, had fortunately directed her deliverer properly; though during the courſe of her narration, and in the agitation occaſioned by

her apprehenſions of Madame de Narbonne's diſpleaſure, ſhe had omitted to give Mademoiſelle de Cordet the ſame information.

The latter, with her companions, conſequently continued their perambulations, and vainly expected the appearance of the Counteſs.

As the period ſpecified for her return was now conſiderably elapſed, Charlotte began to be extremely uneaſy on her account. Preciſely what to fear ſhe knew not; but the behaviour of Madame de Narbonne had long convinced her that there was no deficiency of materials to build the ſtructure of terror upon, and Jacqueline's recent confeſſion had not contributed to overturn the fabric.

Not ignorant, however, of the Counteſs's prevalent paſſion for retirement, her diſlike of obſervation, and repugnance to have any viſiters at the receſs that could poſſibly be avoided, Charlotte feared to venture nearer it than might be agreeable; ſhe therefore confined a great part of her anxiety to her own breaſt, and endeavoured to compoſe her looks, leſt the gentlemen ſhould inſiſt on the propriety of a more minute inveſtigation. Her eyes, nevertheleſs, were conſtantly fixed on the ſpot, and the ſmalleſt intervening noiſe agitated her feelings almoſt to agony.—Oh Friendſhip! incalculable good! pure and ſacred eſſence! thou, whoſe

whoſe ameliorating ſpirit gently guides our weary ſteps through the rugged journey of life, and alone deigns to ſtrew the ſoft leaves of the roſe over the deep thorny paths we are forced to tread upon; bleſſed with thy heart-ſoothing influence, the human mind is beguiled of corroding ſorrow—deprived of thee, all is a gloomy deſert, and the riches of the Eaſt inſufficient to procure happineſs!

Madame de Narbonne could not be completely miſerable while poſſeſſed of this ſupreme, this genuine treaſure in the heart of Charlotte de Cordet.

But ſad experience had taught her that appearances are not always to be truſted: ſhe knew that in France, as well as in Denmark, it was poſſible to "ſmile, and ſmile and be a villain*."

Madame de Narbonne had not yet, therefore, brought herſelf to place implicit confidence in any of "the ſons or daughters of men," by whom ſhe was daily of late ſurrounded.

To this point, however, ſhe was now faſt advancing. The better genius of her young friend ſucceeded in baniſhing the demon of ſuſpicion; diſtruſt and prejudice gradually vaniſhed, and the

* Shakeſpeare.

Counteſs found there was ſtill one cordial drop in the bitter cup of life reſerved for her.

Where either hope or apprehenſion happen to be on the ſtretch, ſuſpenſe is agony. Procraſtination in time became too painful to bear with patient ſubmiſſion. The Counteſs continued inviſible, and the gentlemen began to imagine there was ſome miſtake in the caſe. Uncertain what to conjecture on the occaſion, but fearful of the worſt, Charlotte determined to approach the door alone, and endeavour to make Madame de Narbonne comprehend her danger, in as cautious a manner as poſſible. In conſequence of this reſolution ſhe requeſted her companions to remain in their preſent ſituation, and keep a watchful eye on the ſpot. At this moment a ſervant, almoſt breathleſs with haſte, was ſeen hurrying up the avenue, who, accoſting her, entreated ſhe would immediately return to the Caſtle.

"Where is the Counteſs?" cried Charlotte in extreme agitation, as the man was turning round to depart.

"At home, Mademoiſelle," replied he; "ſhe arrived there ſhortly, and Jacqueline ſent me off to find you; but it was ſome time before my ſearch proved ſucceſsful, owing to the confuſed and erroneous directions I received from her."

On

On her return to the Caſtle, Charlotte learned ſome of the following particulars.—

It ſeems Madame de Narbonne, having long waited in vain for Jacqueline's appearance, at length concluded ſhe had miſunderſtood her orders. Happily, however, all ſeemed to remain perfectly quiet and tranquil around her; ſhe therefore imagined there could be little danger of intruſion from any of the gay viſiters in that quarter, and of courſe reſolved to return unaccompanied by any other attendant than her old nurſe, who reſided in the vicinity of the receſs.

As they approached the avenue, two gentlemen were obſerved making towards them.

Alarmed by the diſcovery of ſtrangers in ſo ſolitary a ſituation, at a period too of general riot and hilarity, Madame de Narbonne inſtantly ſtopped, irreſolute whether to proceed, or return.

By this time the cauſe of her apprehenſion had advanced pretty near: they eyed her with attention, motioned as if preparing to addreſs her, then apparently checked the inclination, leſt it ſhould appear officious, and bowing low as they paſſed, ſlowly continued their way, though not without repeatedly looking back with an air of ſolicitude and obſervation, by no means agreeable to the feelings of her on whom it was particularly beſtowed.

This

This circumſtance was not unnoticed by the youngeſt and moſt elegant of the two ſtrangers. His attention had indeed been directed to every movement of Madame de Narbonne in a much more conſpicuous degree than what was evinced by the other gentleman.

But Jacqueline's deliverer was never indifferent to the ſemblance of diſtreſs; and it is Jacqueline's deliverer of whom we are now ſpeaking.

As the agitation of the Counteſs increaſed, one of her gloves dropped to the ground without her perceiving it.

The ſtranger remarked the incident, and bleſſed it as the means of procuring an introduction; for ſaid he mentally, "It muſt be Madame de Narbonne; ſhe is either apprehenſive of ſome terrifying event, or perhaps has actually met with it. The girl I relieved in the foreſt had certainly ſtrong motives for the pointed charges ſhe gave me reſpecting the ſafety of her Lady; I will for once indulge the powerful, but incomprehenſible impulſe that impels me forward—yes, I will accoſt the Counteſs de Narbonne!"

As he concluded this ſoliloquy, he retraced his former ſteps, and politely apologizing for ſo ſudden a return, preſented the glove with peculiar grace. —He then proceeded to aſſure her that neither he

nor

nor his friend meant to intrude farther than conſiderations for her own ſafety rendered requiſite; begged her, therefore, not to be alarmed by their unexpected appearance, which, he added, was merely in conſequence of thoſe injunctions they had been honoured with on her behalf; and, in ſhort, urged every poſſible argument he could think of, to remove any ſuſpicion ſhe might form to their prejudice. But he talked to the winds! Madame de Narbonne ſeemed inattentive to the ſubſtance of his diſcourſe, although his voice and whole appearance apparently occupied her mind, and occupied it even to the ſemblance of mental derangement. For ſome time ſhe gazed upon him with a fixed look of unutterable aſtoniſhment. At length, "Oh! for Heaven's ſake, who are you?" burſt from her trembling lips; "tell me, tell me, I beſeech you!"

"If, as I ſuſpect, you are the Counteſs de Narbonne, Madame," replied the ſtranger, "I am merely here, at the requeſt of your maid, to protect you from thoſe inſults ſhe had reaſon to fear were awaiting you, and which, by your viſible emotion, I doubt much if you have totally eſcaped. However, Madame, I will now defend you at the riſk of my life; compoſe yourſelf, therefore, and reſt aſſured of my moſt ſtrenuous exertions for that purpoſe,

purpoſe, ſhould circumſtances render them neceſſary."

"But tell me—Oh tell me," repeated ſhe, with a wild earneſtneſs of manner, "who are you that thus, like a long loſt viſion, again ſtart up to view?—thus rivet memory on the dreadful paſt!"

"Would to Heaven," replied he, "I could anſwer this queſtion ſatisfactorily! But what I am I know not, nor is it material to enquire. Depend upon it, I ſincerely mean what I ſay; I am no impoſtor, and will undoubtedly, I again repeat it, protect you at the riſk of my life. Permit me then, Madame, the honour of conducting you home: your ſafety is by no means in an unequivocal ſtate at preſent, and therefore I cannot determine to quit you till ſo important an object is aſcertained. This gentleman or myſelf will afterwards conduct your female companion to whatever place ſhe chuſes to appoint."

"Ah me! I think not of ſuch trifling circumſtances," ſaid the Counteſs, with a deep ſigh. "But pardon the incoherence of my mind; it dwells on departed happineſs, and perverſely contraſts it with exiſting miſery—with preſent, with certain diſappointment; for, alas! too well I now ſee—I feel the abſurdity of ſuch viſionary ideas!"

The

The ſtranger, who had heard ſome vague reports of Madame de Narbonne's melancholy diſpoſition, now ſeriouſly began to conclude her head was diſordered, and whiſpered the other gentleman to join his entreaties for proceeding to the Caſtle, that ſhe might be properly conſigned to the care of her attendants.

Still, however, her thoughts viſibly wandered from the ſubject they repeatedly introduced, and ſtill ſhe talked incoherently as they walked on. Her whole frame was agitated; and ſhe frequently ſtopped, unable to purſue her way. At theſe junctures her eyes recurred to the youthful figure at her ſide; then raiſing them with peculiar expreſſion to Heaven, ſhe would wring her hands, and burſt into a flood of tears that ſeemed to rend every fibre of her heart.

Again, ere they reached the Caſtle gate, ſhe attempted to diſcover the name and rank of her conductors; but this they continued to evade in a way that diſappointed all her hopes, and rendered abortive every wiſh to acquire any knowledge of him who more particularly attracted her attention in ſo unaccountable a manner.

The time of ſeparation now approached, and brought with it additional anguiſh beyond what ſhe had yet experienced. At the inſtant of departure ſhe

ſhe wildly caught hold of his arm, and conjured him, with an air of diſtraction, irreſiſtibly energetic, to indulge her by unmaſking for a moment.

He bowed, and obeyed. The Counteſs gazed on his face in ſpeechleſs agony, and inſtantly uttering a faint ſcream, ſunk inſenſible on the ground before him!

Some of the domeſtics, who had ſeen what paſſed from the Caſtle windows, now haſtened to the ſpot. The ſtrangers aſſiſted in ſupporting her till they arrived, and then retired a few paces to make room for the neceſſary applications. They reflected on the whole in ſilent wonder; and when ſhe was finally conveyed from their ſight, ſtruck into the moſt gloomy and unfrequented part of the foreſt, moralizing on the incident they had witneſſed, and the ſtrange viciſſitudes of human life that could thus make the Counteſs de Narbonne, *apparently*, the only wretched being in the domains of her anceſtors, where all beſides wore the face of happineſs—where mirth and feſtivity re-echoed from every quarter, and ſmiling Pleaſure held unbounded dominion in the volatile hearts of her thoughtleſs votaries.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Good and *evil* are closely connected. In the course of human events, the attainment of a favourite pursuit is often but the birth of a fresh disappointment.

WHILE Madame de Narbonne's nurse faithfully related some of the foregoing incidents, and seemed careful to avoid entering upon others, the former continued insensible to all their efforts for her recovery.

About the conclusion of her intelligence, Agnes, the lay-sister, who was daughter to the old woman, entered the apartment, and her mother briefly recapitulated to her what she had been saying; they then retired to a distant window, and conversed together in a whisper.

In

In a few minutes one of the attendants ſuddenly exclaimed that her Lady was beginning to ſhew ſigns of returning recollection.

The nurſe haſtened to the bed-ſide, and felt her pulſe; then raiſing herſelf, turned round, and aſſured them the Counteſs was recovering.—She added, that though Madame's ſituation was alarming to thoſe unaccuſtomed to ſee her in ſuch a ſtate, yet ſhe, who had long been in the habit of it, and was better acquainted with her conſtitution, knew there was no danger to be apprehended from her preſent indiſpoſition. One thing, however, it was neceſſary to inform them of; the Counteſs had a decided averſion to more attendance than was abſolutely requiſite at ſuch times, and, of courſe, had ſtrictly commanded her injunctions on that head to be properly executed, any failure in which was ſure to be followed with extreme diſpleaſure afterwards, eſpecially if found to be the caſe when the recovery of her ſpeech had taken place; ſhe was therefore obliged to requeſt their immediate abſence, as that event, ſhe perceived, was nearly at hand.

Siſter Agnes opened the door, and her mother looked expreſſively round the room.

The apartment was quickly evacuated, except by

by the two former, Madame's principal maid, and Charlotte.

The latter was evidently expected to follow alſo, for Siſter Agnes ſtill kept the door open, and ſtood in the attitude of waiting for her departure.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet, however, did not ſeem to underſtand the hint: her attention was rivetted on the pale and deathlike countenance of her ſcarcely exiſting friend, in whom the feeble ſpark of life was only viſible, from the convulſive ſpaſms that at intervals ſhook her languid frame almoſt to annihilation.

Some inarticulate words at length faintly lingered on her bloodleſs and parched lips.

The nurſe again expreſſively glanced a look at her daughter, who inſtantly left the room.

Madame de Narbonne ſuddenly raiſed herſelf on the pillow, and franticly exclaimed—"Where is he going?—why leave me ſo ſoon? Oh dear, but viſionary phantom, return!—return again, and bleſs my eyes a few moments longer!"

"Her delirium is ſtrong," ſaid the nurſe, as ſhe bent over the invalid, and attempted to drown her voice by the volubility of her own.

A meſſage at this juncture was ſoftly delivered to Charlotte, requeſting her preſence in another apartment;

apartment; and the door of the one ſhe left was inſtantly locked behind her.

The ſervant who carried this meſſage had already diſappeared, and Siſter Agnes, in whoſe name it was given, could no where be met with.

Charlotte paſſed through ſeveral rooms in queſt of her, but the ſearch proved ineffectual.

"Where, can you tell me, is Siſter Agnes?" ſaid ſhe to one of the ſervants, whom ſhe now obſerved croſſing the end of the gallery.

"She has juſt entered Madame's apartment by a private paſſage," replied the girl.

"Then," thought Charlotte, "ſhe is gone in purſuit of me; I will join her there immediately."

She found admiſſion, however, denied her; the door was faſt locked, and all ſhe could obtain was a whiſper through the keyhole, in which the old woman informed her that the Counteſs was fallen into a refreſhing ſlumber, from which they feared to awake her by any noiſe; and added, that the ſervant muſt have made ſome miſtake, as her daughter had ſet off for the Convent before Mademoiſelle left the apartment, and therefore the meſſage could not have come from her. Charlotte ſaw no farther ſatisfaction was to be obtained at preſent, and conſequently went in purſuit of M. de Clermont and Montague.

The

The evening was now pretty far advanced; but a general illumination had taken place; the park, the grove, the valley, and part of the foreſt exhibited the brightneſs of a meridian ſun under a thouſand fantaſtic forms, and combinations of genius. Groups of dancers lightly ſkimmed over the verdant turf in all directions; and from ſome of the caſements in the Caſtle tranſient glimpſes were caught of thoſe who performed in the temporary building, as their figures in quick ſucceſſion paſſed before the blazing lamps that reflected their ſhadows from the windows.

Sometimes fatigued with exceſs of pleaſure, its gay haunts were deſerted for a ſolitary ramble amidſt the enchanting retirements around. The muſic, however, ſeldom ceaſed, nor were the orgies of Bacchus forgotten; but the "feaſt of reaſon, and the flow of ſoul," were not (at leaſt according to the poet's idea) to be generally met with.

Deeply ſighing at the intereſting contraſt lately diſplayed in Madame de Narbonne's chamber, Charlotte turned from the view in diſguſt, and ordering one of the Counteſs's footmen to attend her, deſcended the ſtaircaſe.

The court was crowded with the number of people aſſembled in it. As ſhe preſſed through them,

and

and had nearly reached the outer gate, a paper was put into her hand without being able to diſtinguiſh from whence it came.

She haſtened to the firſt vacant ſpot under a lamp, and breaking open the ſeal, read as follows:—

"The writer of this note has impatiently waited for a private opportunity to ſpeak with Mademoiſelle de Cordet; his efforts, however, for that purpoſe have hitherto proved ineffectual, and he now therefore takes this method of requeſting to ſee her alone. Nothing inimical to her peace or ſafety can reſult from granting this indulgence; but ſhould motives, nevertheleſs, of fear or prudence interfere to diſappoint him, he has no objection to her being accompanied by M. de Clermont, or any other reſpectable character, provided they remain merely within her call, but by no means near enough to diſcover the ſubject of the conference.

"He confeſſes himſelf not abſolutely unknown to Mademoiſelle de Cordet—nay, he even acknowledges that the principal pleaſure and pain of his exiſtence originated in an event that occurred to her detriment, when under the influence of a diſagreeable accident not many miles diſtant from Clermont.

Particular

Particular circumſtances prevent him from being more explicit at preſent; he therefore recurs to the prayer of his petition, which he requeſts—which he entreats her compliance with, that will quickly be known by dropping a line at the foot of the tree where a tame white fawn was lately ſeparated from her; the writer will then take his meaſures accordingly. His anxiety to learn ſome intelligence of Madame de Narbonne is almoſt equal to what agitates him on another account; in which, however, ſhe can have no concern, nor even Mademoiſelle de Cordet herſelf prove more than a ſecondary cauſe. One line! one ſingle line, to ſignify her acquieſcence, will nevertheleſs outweigh, in his eſtimation, the value of worlds!—May it be propitious to his wiſhes!"

Twice had Charlotte reperuſed this myſterious epiſtle, without comprehending one word of its ſingular contents.

On a third attempt her ideas became more clear; and before ſhe had nearly finiſhed it, a thouſand combinations of various circumſtances ruſhed upon her memory; ſhe dropped the letter from her hand,

and ſuddenly exclaimed—" Good God! this muſt certainly be St. Julian!"

She now recollected the ſimilitude of the picture ſhe had loſt in the grove of pines to that diſcovered in the boſom of the gentleman who relieved her from the troubleſome attendance of the tame fawn. St. Julian's reſemblance to the Counteſs had formerly and powerfully ſtruck her. Some words in the epiſtle implied a knowledge of that lady's preſent diſtreſſing condition. Might it not be himſelf who had conducted her to the caſtle gate? Might not his features have agitated her by diſplaying a family likeneſs to ſome dear, ſome departed friend, whom ſhe herſelf was thought to reſemble? The ſentence uttered in her delirium ſtrongly indicated as much; and, from her nurſe's account of his voice, air, figure, and ſtature, nay even his very features when he unmaſked, Mademoiſelle de Cordet became more and more convinced ſhe was right in her conjecture. Of his features, indeed, the old woman did not give a very minute deſcription, for the ſudden indiſpoſition of Madame had, ſhe ſaid, occupied all her attention; but from the embarraſſed manner in which ſhe mentioned them, ſeveral words had dropped to convince her auditor, on recollection, that a ſimilitude to the Counteſs,

or

or ſome other perſon within her knowledge, had evidently been recognized by her alſo.

Jacqueline's deſcription too of her preſerver's appearance and conduct exactly coincided with every other circumſtance that had occurred reſpecting the judgment Charlotte had formed of both their protectors.

She lifted the letter from the ground, walked ſlowly on, and again its contents were examined.

"Go on," ſaid ſhe, turning to the ſervant who accompanied her, "go on, and endeavour to find M. de Clermont; tell him to meet me here immediately; I wiſh to ſee him on particular buſineſs."

"Now," thought ſhe, "the fate of the lamented picture ſhall, if poſſible, be aſcertained, and the Counteſs again obtain poſſeſſion of it; now ſhall M. de Clermont have an opportunity of thanking my gallant deliverer, and perhaps be able to repay part of the obligation, by rendering himſelf in ſome manner ſerviceable to him; and now too ſhall the myſterious expreſſions in this letter be developed, and my curioſity gratified by an explanation. —Yes, it muſt be written by St. Julian! it can only be St. Julian himſelf!"

"Behold him here!" exclaimed a perſon, cautiouſly emerging from the ſhrubbery through which ſhe was paſſing.

Charlotte involuntarily recoiled a few ſteps, and obſerved him in ſilence.

The ſtranger raiſed his ſhining helmet, momentarily removed his maſk, and St. Julian himſelf ſtood confeſſed before her!

Charlotte inſtantly advanced, and in accents of pleaſing ſurpriſe and gratitude, expreſſed her happineſs at ſo unexpected an interview.

Such a reception was what St. Julian was entitled to meet with; but his own meritorious conduct, on any occaſion, was the laſt thing his modeſty would have ſuffered him to build upon.

Of courſe Mademoiſelle de Cordet's behaviour appeared in too flattering a light not to be productive of the higheſt ſatisfaction, and they mutually converſed with the confidence and eaſe of old acquaintances.

The tame fawn's rendezvous at the tree was now become unneceſſary.

To avoid interruption, however, they ſtruck into a more unfrequented path, and there Charlotte requeſted to know if her ſuſpicions were juſt reſpecting his meeting with the Counteſs, and the very material protection afforded her maid in the foreſt.

He gracefully bowed, and confeſſed her conjectures were right in both inſtances; but ſeemed much

much affected by her account of Madame's ſituation, and no leſs relieved, at the concluſion of the intelligence, to learn ſhe was not ſuppoſed to be in any danger from the recent agitation of mind he had left her in. Her incoherent expreſſions were perfectly, he ſaid, incomprehenſible to him at the time; but a friend, who then accompanied him, afterwards mentioned the old ſtory of his reſemblance to that lady;—perhaps it might be applicable to more of her family, and in that caſe recal painful recollections to her memory.

"The very identical explanation of her feelings occurred to me," replied Charlotte, "immediately upon the idea ariſing that my former preſerver and her conductor home were one and the ſame perſon. What ſhe uttered in her delirium, when I laſt left her apartment, is a further confirmation of this ſuppoſition; and well do I remember how ſtrong the ſimilitude appeared to myſelf, when I firſt particularly obſerved you in the cottage."

While ſhe continued ſpeaking, St. Julian appeared abſent and reſtleſs; he ſeemed anxious to interrupt her, yet uncertain what to ſay; every look indicated ſomething he wiſhed to queſtion her upon—every movement ſhewed his mind intent on another ſubject.

At length he ſpoke of his ardent deſire to obtain a few minutes' private converſation with her, and related how frequently he had been diſappointed in every attempt to procure it, by continually finding her ſurrounded or accompanied by people whom he wiſhed to avoid, and before whom it was impoſſible to explain himſelf, if ——

He pauſed, faltered, and remained irreſolute how to proceed.

"For Heaven's ſake, go on!" cried Charlotte; "I am impatient to know in what I can be ſerviceable to you."

"Yes," replied he, "you can be of ſervice to me, of infinite ſervice in a point on which depend my future and deareſt hopes of happineſs! For this I have unceaſingly watched your motions, and groaned over repeated diſappointments; for this, in the agony of deſpair, I wrote to you; and, with this in view, I followed the bearer of my letter to the ſpot in which I fortunately attained ſome part of my wiſhes. The accompliſhment of the whole depends upon your lips;—ſay, may I proceed? To be unſucceſsful now would prove worſe than if I had never made the attempt; but to doubt your goodneſs is hereſy!—And yet, pardon my irreſolution, dear Mademoiſelle de Cordet, I ſcarcely know what I am ſaying; have the goodneſs

neſs to tell me, I beſeech you—— May I expect you to be explicit?"

"What," cried Charlotte, with a ſmile, "before I am acquainted with the nature of your queſtion? But come," continued ſhe, aſſuming a more ſerious air, "try me for once.—Your claims upon my gratitude are not ſmall, and you may ſafely truſt to them if within the limits of poſſibility to accompliſh what is requeſted."

"Know you then this picture?" ſaid he, with much emotion; "are you acquainted with the original?—and was it dropped by you in the grove of pines, that memorable grove in which I obtained ſo precious a relic?"—He pauſed, and ſtedfaſtly gazed upon her face in breathleſs expectation.

"Give it me!" cried Charlotte eagerly, as he held it in his hand for her inſpection. "Oh good God! how fortunate thus to recover it!"

"Anſwer my queſtions in the firſt place," replied St. Julian, withdrawing his hand, and affecting to ſmile in turn at her earneſt manner.

But the ſmile indicated woe in his heart, while it dimpled the manly cheek it played upon.

Recollection, however, ſoon recalled the words, —"how fortunate thus to recover it!" Theſe undoubtedly implied a knowledge of the original. His heart beat more rapidly, and the glow of hope

ſpread its real, its genuine influence over every feature.

Again he beſought, he implored for an anſwer; and again he ſolemnly averred that a dearer intereſt than exiſtence depended upon the nature of it.

"Well then," ſaid ſhe gaily, "you ſhall not expire in ignorance; I am unacquainted with the original, nor has it ever been in my power to diſcover for whom it was even intended; accident threw it in my way, and accident dropped it in the grove where I left you."

"If ſo," cried St. Julian, ſtriking his hand on his forehead, and ſtaggering backwards, "my enquiries are nearly at an end!"

Compaſſion and aſtoniſhment were legible on Charlotte's benign countenance, and deprived her, at the moment, of utterance.

By an effort, of which deſperation is ſometimes productive, he recollected himſelf, and again advancing, in faltering accents entreated to know the accident which had put her in poſſeſſion of the fatal miniature, and to whom it had previouſly belonged.

With a pitying eye ſhe ſurveyed him, and reluctantly replied that ſhe was not at liberty to anſwer theſe interrogatories.

"Not

"Not at liberty!" he exclaimed: "Heavens and earth! what is the meaning of this? But you know her! I ſee you do, cruel Mademoiſelle de Cordet!—Tell me, I repeat it, what is the meaning of this?"

"A ſolemn promiſe, dear St. Julian, is the meaning of it; and you are too much a man of honour to inſiſt upon a forfeiture of my word."

He gazed upon her with the vacant ſtare of a perſon who comprehends not what you are ſaying to him.

Charlotte went ſoftly up to him, laid her hand on his trembling arm, and looking in his face with increaſed compaſſion, beſought him to be calm, and liſten to her with patience. He bowed, covered his eyes with his handkerchief, and attempted to ſpeak; but the inarticulate ſentence died on his lips.

"My ſituation," continued Charlotte, "is peculiarly diſtreſſing; believe me, St. Julian, it is at preſent painful in the extreme! The firſt wiſh of my heart would be to comply with your requeſt, would exiſting circumſtances admit of ſuch a ſtep; but theſe are, alas! decidedly againſt it; a ſolemn promiſe muſt not be broken—nay, I am certain you are the laſt man who would urge me to the commiſſion of ſo wicked, ſo contemptible a crime!

The perſon, through whoſe means that picture fell into my hands, bound me, by all that is ſacred on earth, to conceal her name, and every other incident connected with the conſequences that attended my ſeeing it. Thus far, however, I may venture to gratify your curioſity; I do not believe ſhe herſelf is particularly acquainted with the fate of the lady whoſe reſemblance the miniature exhibits, at leaſt her words ſeemed to imply an ignorance of it:—that ſhe ſtill lives, however, might likewiſe be gathered from the tenor of them; but this I ſuſpect contains the ultimatum of her knowledge on the ſubject:—more, St. Julian, is not, alas! in my power to gratify you with."

"Thus then conclude my hopes from the late viſionary proſpect I have been purſuing," ſaid he, with a deep ſigh. "From the moment this picture firſt came into my poſſeſſion, expectation has never failed to flatter me with a thouſand imaginary bleſſings!—But a ſoldier is not his own maſter, and private indulgence muſt yield to public good. The duties of a military life would not admit of making perſonal enquiries ſooner than to-day; and now, when that object has been attained, what is the reſult?—Alas! bitter diſappointment, and new ſources of deſpair! The curtain of deception has again dropped, and left me, as uſual, the child of Misfortune!"

He

He pauſed, and advancing to Charlotte, took her hand.

"Pardon me, dear Mademoiſelle de Cordet, pardon me," added he, "for the compaſſionate ſorrow I ſee I have occaſioned you to feel. I am going to mix in ſcenes of war and carnage, and perhaps may never more have an opportunity of expreſſing my gratitude for your patient indulgence. Accept then, at preſent, my warmeſt acknowledgments for what you have done; that I have benefited ſo little by it, is my loſs, but certainly can be no fault of your's. I hear the ſound of approaching voices, and muſt bid you farewel!—If we meet no more, why farewel for ever, and may all that is good attend you!"

He turned from her to conceal the ſenſations which wrung his heart, and gliſtened in his eyes, in ſpite of every manly effort to ſuppreſs them.

"St. Julian," cried Charlotte, again detaining him by the arm, "leave me not in this painful ſtate of ſuſpenſe; I have hitherto avoided aſking queſtions, leſt it ſhould add to your diſtreſs;—but I cannot part from you thus!—Deny me not then ſome ſhare of your confidence before we ſeparate; perhaps it may hereafter be in my power to repay it with intereſt. Tell me, I pray you, who is the original of that painting; tell me alſo in what

manner I can moſt eſſentially be of ſervice to you, ſhould any fortunate occurrence enable me to attempt it.—Is ſhe your relation?—Who is ſhe? Believe me, no impulſe of female curioſity dictates the queſtion; you will at leaſt do juſtice to the purity of my motives, if no other ſatisfaction is granted me.—St. Julian, you ſpeak not!—but your ſilence is expreſſive; I will urge you no farther."

"Beſt of human beings! good, generous, and friendly Mademoiſelle de Cordet! yes, I will ſpeak," exclaimed St. Julian warmly—"I will anſwer your interrogatories to the utmoſt of my ability:—ſhe is not a relation of mine; but ſhe is dearer to me than worlds, or the ties of blood can make her! I have loſt her, however!—This infernal war! Alas! I dare not be more explicit. Adieu!—once more adieu!—My ſweet, my ever reſpected friend, farewel!"

St. Julian's emotion was extreme: he bowed, again raiſed his handkerchief to his face, and ſlowly turned to depart.

Charlotte's feelings were equally acute; they became oppreſſive, and it was with difficulty ſhe faltered out a requeſt to leave the picture with her.

"I had forgot that circumſtance," ſaid St. Julian. "Grief is a ſelfiſh paſſion, and apt to abſorb every other

other ſenſation. To ſave my fellow-mortals ſome portion of their allotted miſery has ever been my endeavour; and conſcious ſo invaluable a treaſure muſt have been deeply regretted the moment you diſcovered its loſs, yet unwilling to part with the only remaining conſolation in my poſſeſſion, I have had recourſe to a little deception, which my principles would not let me conceal from your knowledge, and for which I now throw myſelf on your mercy. I have had a copy taken: the original has been extracted from its ſparkling ornaments and replaced by the former.—*Voila!*" cried he, preſenting the two miniatures with a melancholy ſmile, "another and the ſame! The difference, I believe, is not perceptible to a common obſerver; though to obtain the genuine one was a matter of infinite conſequence to me."

Charlotte compared them together, and acknowledged herſelf incompetent to diſcover the change he mentioned. The ſetting of each appeared not, however, quite ſimilar; that intended for Madame de Narbonne was richly adorned with jewels; the other was plainer finiſhed, though in the ſame form, and had a knot of very beautiful hair, intermixed with a darker ſhade (apparently St. Julian's own), curiouſly worked round the edge of it. This he replaced in his boſom, and preſented the former, in the

the original dreſs, to Charlotte, who at firſt heſitated how to proceed, from averſion to every ſpecies of deception.

St. Julian watched her looks; he ſaw her irreſolution, and trembled for the conſequence.

Recollecting, however, that the Counteſs could not poſſibly be injured by a change which was not obſervable, and of which ſhe was totally unſuſpicious, while, on the contrary, St. Julian's countenance announced that every wound of his heart would bleed afreſh by the deprivation of this imaginary conſolation, Charlotte permitted the dictates of humanity to triumph over thoſe of ſtrict juſtice, and accepted the fictitious miniature, without enhancing the value of compliance by any unfeeling comments on the merit of it.

When high-formed or favourite expectations happen to be overturned by the rough hand of diſappointment, the humbler gifts of Fortune are received with thankfulneſs, and acknowledged with gratitude.

St. Julian's mind was lightened of a heavy burthen; and he was again on the point of pouring forth his feelings for her goodneſs, when the voices already heard were diſcovered to be too near to admit of it.

He

He ſnatched her hand, haſtily preſſed it to his lips, and diſappeared in a moment!

The perſons who approached were Auſtin Marat and De la Ville; they ſeemed engaged in earneſt converſation. She was not in a mood for ſuch aſſociates, and ſoftly ſtole, unperceived, from their view. On regaining the path where ſhe had parted with the ſervant, it appeared he had been in ſearch of her for ſome time. M. de Clermont was not to be found. That, however, was now become a matter of no conſequence; ſhe had ſeen St. Julian, and the interview was over for which ſhe requeſted his preſence.

The night was now "at odds with morning;" her heart proved not in uniſon with the gay ſcenes that ſtill held their courſe in the foreſt, the valley, and the park: ſhe turned from them, and purſued her way to the Caſtle.

Madame de Narbonne ſtill continued, however, inacceſſible to all, except her principal maid and the nurſe. She was nevertheleſs conſiderably better, ſo Charlotte was informed, and with this intelligence ſhe was forced to content herſelf at preſent.

Early next day the Counteſs requeſted to ſee her.

She obeyed the ſummons with alacrity, and found Madame de Narbonne's recovery exceeded her expectations.

The

The picture was preſented; and the heartfelt pleaſure it occaſioned was reflected back on the feeling and friendly diſpoſition of the donor.

She accounted for regaining it in a manner as near the truth as poſſible; but the whole truth was not told.

In point of ſincerity, however, Madame de Narbonne was not one ſtraw behind hand with her: ſhe related the cauſe of her late illneſs much as Charlotte gave the hiſtory of the miniature—that is to ſay, ſhe entered upon no particulars, told what ſhe pleaſed, concealed what ſhe pleaſed, endeavoured to preſerve her veracity, and changed the ſubject the moment ſhe could decently accompliſh it.

Charlotte imagined there was ſomething ſhe knew not how to define—a ſort of evaſive behaviour which ſhe had ſeldom before ſo obviouſly remarked in Madame de Narbonne's conduct.

A certain conſciouſneſs that the Counteſs might retaliate the charge, perhaps rendered her more minute in her obſervations.

In moſt caſes of duplicity we are apt to ſuppoſe others ſwayed by the ſame motives of action which we feel to be the ruling ſpring of our own; hence ſuſpicion tinctures the movements of our neighbours with a ſimilarity of intention when perhaps it exiſts not in reality.

In

In the preſent inſtance it is probable neither of the ladies would have erred widely by indulging ſuch conjectures of each other.

The kind and even affectionate reception Charlotte however met with, when the firſt embarraſſment was over on both ſides, ſoon gave her thoughts a different turn; and on Jacqueline's entreaty for her intereſt with the Counteſs, ſhe readily undertook the cauſe, and ſucceſsfully terminated it, by procuring an act of indemnity and oblivion for the paſt, provided the like offence was not repeated in future.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

" Three times they ſtrove to ſeize their prey,
" Three times they quick retire ;
" What force could ſtand his furious ſtrokes,
" Or meet his martial fire ?"

PERCY'S RELIQUES.

THOUGH the late public entertainment at the Caſtle was now over, the conſequences reſulting from it were not ſo ſoon at an end. By the friendly aid of the maſks generally adopted on the occaſion, (which had been artfully propoſed by Marat, to further the various machinations his contriving brain was meditating), the different parties found themſelves more at liberty to make thoſe obſervations on the conduct of their neighbours which might

might afterwards prove of ſervice to their own cauſe. The intelligence obtained by this means was ſuch as Auſtin imagined of ſufficient importance to require his immediate return to Paris; and in conſequence of the report there made on the ſubject, a military force was inſtantly ordered to march againſt Charette's army, in the province of Poictou.

The Royaliſts, however, were not unprepared to receive them: the information procured by ſome of their friends, (who alſo attended the *fête champêtre* for that purpoſe), put them upon their guard; and reconnoitering parties, in ſmall numbers, patrolled round the country in ſecret, but various directions.

The Miniſter for the War Department ſent orders to the Caſtle for De la Ville to repair, with all the ſtrength he could muſter, to a ſtation appointed at ſome diſtance, where he was to wait the arrival of Pariſian troops; and when a junction was effected with ſome other corps deſtined for that ſervice, the Royal banditti (as they ſtyled the enemy) were to be attacked on all ſides.

In an army compoſed of ſo heterogeneous a multitude as Charette commanded, no wonder if numbers came under, and really merited the appellation of banditti. It was morally impoſſible, where the ſituation of affairs rendered freedom of

choice

choice impracticable, to have nothing but ſelect or well-diſciplined men at his diſpoſal; but the generality of them were certainly by no means inferior to their competitors in any ſhape whatever.

De la Ville's march from Narbonne was no ſooner diſcovered, than a ſmall but deſperate band of the oppoſite party formed the reſolution of plundering his poſſeſſions, and carrying off the Counteſs, againſt whom, as having once been a Royaliſt, many of them felt a particular degree of bitterneſs, originating, it was ſaid, from the huſband ſhe had lately choſen, and the imaginary ties ſhe was ſuppoſed to have formed with the Convention: ſuch, at leaſt, were the oſtenſible reaſons held forth as a motive for the commiſſion of this outrage, but ſecret expectations of emolument more probably the genuine and ſole mover of the idea.

Happily an accident diſcovered the deſign to Mr. Montague on the evening prior to its being put in execution.

He communicated the intelligence to M. de Clermont and a few others, who, with ſome truſty followers, haſtily aſſembled, but well-armed, repaired before midnight, by private and unfrequented paths, to the Caſtle, where taking their ſtation in the moſt advantageous poſition, they firmly waited the approach of the enemy.

Of

Of all the cuſtomary inhabitants of the Caſtle, Madame de Narbonne and Charlotte were the only two made acquainted with the extent of the danger; from all beſides it was carefully concealed: and ſo far from entertaining a notion of any hoſtile attack being in agitation, the reſt of the houſehold were led to believe that, whatever military manœuvres might take place that night, were merely occaſioned by the march of ſome Conventional troops on their way to the main body of the Army.

This precaution was judged expedient, to guard againſt the effects of chance or treachery; as many of the domeſtics, introduced by De la Ville, were of ſuch a deſcription, and ſo perfectly unprincipled, as to render them liable to ſuſpicion if tampered with by either ſide. Thoſe who were publicly known to be of this character, Charlotte endeavoured to keep as much at a diſtance as poſſible from any knowledge of the truth;—indeed the Counteſs herſelf was allowed to remain ignorant of the real ſtate of the caſe, till conſiderations for her perſonal ſafety would no longer admit of it. Anxious to avoid giving her more uneaſineſs than was abſolutely requiſite, every diſagreeable communication was concealed from her ear, till proper meaſures were taken for ſelf-preſervation; and the whole prepara-

tions

tions in a train for effectually diſappointing the hopes of the plunderers.

This attention to the eaſe of her mind ſeemed, however, a matter of little moment to her for whom it was deſigned. With Madame de Narbonne all ſituations appeared nearly equal; ſhe was apparently become indifferent alike to the common terms of ſafety and danger, and with the ſemblance of calm compoſure, ſilently awaited her deſtiny. The name of Marat alone had the power to ſhake her fortitude; and it almoſt amounted to a certainty that he was now otherwiſe engaged than in meditating miſchief againſt her, had he been inclined to do ſo. Once, and only once, ſhe expreſſed a wiſh to reach her favourite retirement at the Rock of Narbonne; but the expected period of attack approached too near its commencement to admit of venturing out from the Caſtle, where alone any reaſonable chance of ſecurity was to be looked for at this juncture.

As for her young companion, Mademoiſelle de Cordet, we have already remarked that her mind and ſoul were ſuperior to the generality of her ſex. She knew not what it was to yield to ſelfiſh conſiderations when the good of others called for aſſiſtance: and though, as we have likewiſe ſaid, perfectly feminine in her diſpoſition, where it was character-

iſtically proper to be ſo; yet to that miſerable affectation of what is falſely called ſenſibility, and ſo conveniently diſplayed by the common run of thoſe watery-eyed beings who are conſtantly weeping and ſighing over every trifling occurrence, Charlotte was entirely a ſtranger.—To prove beneficially ſerviceable, "and to do unto others as ſhe would be done by," formed the great baſis of all her principal actions.

She ſeldom appeared to ſuch advantage as at the criſis of danger or difficulty; and though afterwards ſhe ſometimes ſunk under the force of her exertions, ſelf-collectedneſs never forſook her in the moment of immediate trial.

The former did not depend on herſelf, but the conſtitution Nature had given her; the latter proceeded from the ſtrength of her own mind, and the ſuperiority of its faculties.

Nothing could ſurpaſs the merit of her conduct on the preſent occaſion; her attention to the Counteſs was great and unremitting; ſhe ſeemed more intereſted in her welfare than that lady appeared to be herſelf.

At length every thing was ſettled, and all that the ſhortneſs of the warning would admit of, arranged in the beſt manner that was practicable. The lights were extinguiſhed, a guard placed at the

the end of the gallery leading to the ſuite of apartments particularly occupied by Madame de Narbonne; and ſhe and Mademoiſelle de Cordet, having retreated to the moſt ſecure ſituation they could fix upon, endeavoured to prepare their minds for the event, in ſilent expectation of what was to follow.

The great clock above the eaſtern gate now heavily ſtruck twelve, with a ſolemn ſlowneſs that reverberated on the air; and the ſenſations it occaſioned were like thoſe produced by a funeral knell! Charlotte ſtood liſtening at one of the windows, as the laſt ſound died ſullenly away: an awful ſtillneſs again reigned; ſhe continued in the ſame ſpot a few minutes longer; no alarm yet took place, nor did there ſeem to be any approaching indications of it. After another cautious look round the duſky expanſe, ſhe ſoftly cloſed the window, and retired to an oppoſite receſs, where the Counteſs had already ſeated herſelf.

That death is always a great evil, belongs to the happier ſons and daughters of Proſperity to maintain. I pretend not to controvert their opinion; though, in the courſe of a checquered exiſtence, ſome reaſons may probably have occurred to make me think otherwiſe. Still, however, while Miſery

may

may court its final relief, Nature recoils from the actual preſence of the liberator.

Madame de Narbonne thought he would have been more welcome in a leſs queſtionable ſhape; and, Charlotte, even the hitherto firm Charlotte de Cordet, repeatedly ſummoned every particle of fortitude in her compoſition, without being able to convince herſelf that death was not at this juncture a great evil.

Thus it frequently happens that particular circumſtances and ſituations produce a change in our ideas of good and evil; thus the preſent misfortune is ever conſidered as greateſt; and bleſſings enhance in value as they are viewed through the medium of futurity.

The unpleaſant and fearful train of reflections which occupied the reſpective minds of their owners, was, however, ſoon interrupted by ſtill more dreadful ones.

A flaſh of light ſuddenly ſhone through a ſmall opening in the ſhutters; and the report of fire arms inſtantly following, announced the arrival of the enemy.

Madame de Narbonne, rouſed from the torpor of ſilent but horrid expectation, ſtarted from the ſofa on which ſhe leaned: what her own private ſorrows could not effect (for theſe ſhe kept to herſelf),

was immediately cauſed by the conſideration of thoſe ſufferings upon the point of being experienced by others on her account. The contemplation was terrible, and ſo forcibly preſented itſelf to her imagination, that Charlotte found it difficult, for ſome time, to leſſen the poignancy of her anguiſh.

The claſh of arms grew evidently louder; it even ſeemed to approach nearer their retreat:—the groans of the wounded and dying were diſtinctly heard; but the torturing uncertainty which ſide prevailed, remained for ſome time unmitigated.

At length a noiſe in the gallery reached them; the conteſt appeared to be renewed with redoubled fury, and to rage with deſtructive violence in that quarter of the Caſtle. It clearly increaſed; confuſion, and fearful ſounds of diſmay reverberated on every ſide.

The name of Marat was loudly pronounced with an horrid imprecation, and immediately the guard at the outer door exclaimed they were overpowered. The Counteſs de Narbonne heard no more; ſhe inſtantly loſt all knowledge of what was paſſing, and in the next moment her lifeleſs form lay extended upon the floor!

Charlotte's uſual fortitude was now brought to a practical and ſevere trial, and ſhe found herſelf ſcarcely equal to the calls made upon it.

For

For ſome time ſhe ſtood in mute diſtreſs, with her hands claſped, and her eyes fixed on the pallid countenance of Madame de Narbonne. Heedleſs of her own ſituation, and unable to decide on the terrific occurrences of the moment, an oppreſſive ſickneſs weighed heavy on her heart, infinitely worſe than a total deprivation of feeling. Her ſteps were rooted to the ſpot, and her ardent gaze ſtill reſted with a wild look of deſpair on the motionleſs object before her; when, after ſeveral unſucceſsful attempts to open the door, and repeated calls for entrance, without obtaining the ſmalleſt attention to the demand, it was forcibly burſt open by M. de Clermont and Mr. Montague.

Joy and grief are ſometimes productive of the ſame effect: Charlotte ſtarted at their appearance, heaved a deep ſigh, and, pointing to the Counteſs, ſunk down ſpeechleſs, unable longer to ſupport herſelf, at the feet of the gentlemen.

Jacqueline, whoſe fears at the commencement of the attack were not to be ſuppreſſed, and who had been too much occupied by her own apprehenſions to prove ſerviceable to others, was now loudly called for by M. de Clermont; but it was not till after many repetitions of her name had fully aſcertained his voice, that ſhe ventured to emerge from her concealment in a neighbouring cloſet, whither

ſhe had fled for farther ſafety, when the conteſt in the gallery ſtruck her ſenſes with additional terror.

They were nearly, however, deprived of her aſſiſtance a ſecond time, for ſhe was again upon the point of diſappearing when ſhe firſt caſt her eyes on her deliverers.—M. de Clermont, indeed, though ſtained with blood, was not materially injured; but Montague bled much, and had received ſeveral dangerous wounds;—nevertheleſs his anxiety for the welfare and recovery of the ladies prevented, for ſome time, all conſiderations of a perſonal nature. Theſe, however, now began to force themſelves upon his attention; and the pain he experienced gradually increaſed to ſuch a degree, that it was with difficulty he preſerved himſelf from falling, as he leant upon a ſtill reeking ſword, which bent beneath the preſſure of his weight and agony.

The ſurrounding domeſtics were, however, occupied by their attendance on their Lady, and obſerved not his ſituation.

The Counteſs was conveyed to her bedchamber, and the uſual methods employed for her recovery.

Mademoiſelle de Cordet, on opening her eyes, fancied ſhe ſaw the form of St. Julian. Her firſt acquaintance with him had commenced during

ſomething

ſomething of a ſimilar indiſpoſition, and that too in conſequence of a diſagreeable occurrence having taken place. The coincidence of circumſtances therefore naturally recalled his image before her returning ſenſes had acquired their full powers of diſcrimination; and the pale hue of her cheeks inſtantly changed to the deepening tinge of pleaſure.

She attempted to ſpeak; but her faltering tongue refuſed its office.

M. de Clermont addreſſed her in a voice expreſſive of the utmoſt anxiety; ſhe raiſed her head to thank him, and her eyes again encountered the ſame object, as with a heavy groan he endeavoured to ſupport himſelf againſt the wainſcot on which he now leant. At that moment the ſudden exclamation of "Montague!" which burſt from M. de Clermont, deſtroyed the illuſion of fancy, by more plainly diſcovering the cauſe from whence it had originated.

"Mr. Montague," repeated ſhe, languidly, "ah! how comes this?—Whence theſe dreadful, theſe deadly appearances?"

"Be compoſed, my dear girl," returned M. de Clermont, "be compoſed, and I will tell you all." He led her to a ſituation more favourable for receiving the benefit of freſh air, by which, and

other proper applications, ſhe was ſoon enabled to comprehend the narration of facts he related, and learned, to her infinite relief, that her friends were victorious; the ſucceſs had only been obtained by great exertions of courage and conduct, in both which reſpects Haſtings and Montague had particularly diſtinguiſhed themſelves; and by amazing efforts of valour, prevented the aſſailants from forcing their way to the apartments of Madame de Narbonne, though they had contrived to penetrate as far as the end of the gallery, where the guard was ſtationed for her protection. There, however, the Engliſhmen with a few followers had boldly purſued them, ſword in hand, at the evident riſk of their lives; and, at the moſt critical moment of the conteſt, irreſiſtibly carried every thing before them.

Here M. de Clermont was interrupted by the ſudden entrance of Mr. Haſtings, who caſting a glance round the room, inſtantly ruſhed up to Montague, and ſeizing him by the arm, with a look of friendly ſolicitude, eagerly exclaimed—'What, my dear fellow, you are wounded they tell me!—Not mortally, I hope?—No, faith, not mortally ſure?"

"I know not," replied Montague, with an arch ſmile, (while indications of acute pain ſat impreſſed on every feature, and quickly effaced the traces of the

the former), "I know not if my wounds extend that length, for I received them, you know, from *your* friends, the Royaliſts!"

"Oh! damn Royaliſts as well as Republicans, if they are ſcoundrels!—It is raſcality, and not party, that I war againſt," cried Haſtings, with warmth. "But you bleed ſtill! Why the devil are not your wounds dreſſed?"

"A ſurgeon is ſent for," replied M. de Clermont; "in the meantime I have endeavoured to tie them up to the beſt of my knowledge. The blood, you ſee, proceeded from them formerly. It now flows no longer. The quantity is not wonderful, when the actions he performed are recollected."

"Why, yes," ſaid Haſtings, and his eyes gliſtened as he ſpoke, "the fellow is a brave fellow, and I truſt will yet live to give the villains on both ſides many a complete drubbing. But damn it, Montague, why do you change colour, and make ſo many wry faces! I feel every one of them like the point of a ſword. Marching up to the mouth of a cannon oneſelf is a mere trifle, a frolic compared to ſeeing a fellow-creature in ſuch agony!"

"We will move him a little more to this ſide; his head is too low," obſerved M. de Clermont; "but it muſt be done cautiouſly, leſt any change of poſture ſhould ſet his wounds bleeding again."

Montague had been placed on the couch left by Charlotte, when conducted nearer the window by her uncle, M. de Clermont.

Though in great pain, he was affected by the kindneſs of their manner, and the applauſe they continued to beſtow upon his courage and cool intrepidity of conduct.—"I muſt not," ſaid he, in a low voice, which his ſituation rendered almoſt inarticulate, "I muſt not receive more than is my due; and ſuch commendations as you now honour me with, are certainly ſo. You arrived too late, I believe, to ſee the noble youth who cut down the ruffian by whom I was principally wounded; he levelled him to the ground juſt as his arm was raiſed a ſecond time to repeat a ſtroke ſimilar to one that had already rendered me incapable of reſiſtance. My gallant defender is unknown to me; but he undoubtedly belonged not to the firſt band of Brigands;—this I even then underſtood, from the reſentment indignantly expreſſed at the atrocity of their proceedings, and the high tone in which he commanded forbearance, while he threatened vengeance from their General for the midnight outrage they had dared to commit, and aſſured them their conduct ſhould be properly repreſented for that purpoſe, on his rejoining the main body of the army. Then turning to me, in a manner peculiarly impreſſive,

impreſſive, he entreated I would do M. Charette the juſtice to believe him perfectly ignorant of this villanous attempt;—adding, that he himſelf only diſcovered it from the report of fire arms reaching him as he was marching to another quarter of the country, in conſequence of which he haſtened forward, leſt the Counteſs, or her fair friend, (if ſtill at the Caſtle), might be ſubjected to any further inſults like thoſe lately intended for the former on the night of the *fête champêtre*.

Solicitous to give the generous ſtranger his full portion of merit, Montague had proceeded thus far with much difficulty, and after many pauſes. He was again going to reſume the ſubject one of theſe momentary ſtops had interrupted, when Charlotte ſuddenly repeated—"The Counteſs and her fair friend!—Heavens, Monſieur! of whom are you ſpeaking?—What is his name?"

Surpriſed at the eager tone of voice in which this enquiry was made, he, to whom it was addreſſed, once more exerted himſelf to anſwer it, and feebly replied, "I fear theſe are queſtions I am incompetent to ſatisfy you in. At the period of his appearance the fate of each ſide ſeemed at its criſis; both parties fought with deſperation, and a little time muſt have determined in whoſe favour the beam of victory was to preponderate,

derate. Overwhelmed by numbers, our chance, however, was a bad one, and I doubt much if the utmoſt efforts would have availed us any longer, when the gallant ſtranger's arrival turned the tide of ſucceſs againſt the aſſailants, and left us maſters of the field. The faintneſs that ſeized me, occaſioned by a great loſs of blood, prevented my being able to make further obſervations; only this I know, that he was the moſt intereſting figure I ever met with, and for real courage and cool intrepidity of conduct appeared to me unequalled; I never ſhall forget the manly energy of his manner when he firſt ruſhed in amongſt us!"

Montague had now exhauſted his ſmall remaining ſhare of ſtrength; and though latterly he ſeemed inſpired by the ſubject of his panegyric, he was, nevertheleſs, under the neceſſity of diſcontinuing it.

Haſtings, who had left the room to ſend a ſecond meſſage in queſt of the ſurgeon, entered it again juſt as his friend ceaſed ſpeaking; but ſuſpecting to whom his laſt words alluded, he warmly vociferated —"Yes, faith! the youth ſeems to have more of the man, and leſs of the monkey or the wolf in his compoſition than any of his countrymen I have yet ſeen.—Damn me, if I don't believe he has got ſome Engliſh blood in his veins! he conducted himſelf

himſelf like a true ſon of the Britiſh lion, and that, you know, is a nobler animal than any his bleſſed Republic produces."

"Pray, Monſieur," ſaid Charlotte, languidly addreſſing the laſt ſpeaker, "cannot you recollect the name of this gentleman who has proved ſo critically ſerviceable?"

"I am deviliſhly bad at remembering your plaguy French names ſince the Convention has given them a cropping; they are now ſo completely curtailed of their dignities, that there ſcarcely remains a ſingle *De* to diſtinguiſh them by. Let me ſee, though, this man deſerves to have his recollected, however."—He ſtopped apparently to attempt it.

"Proceed, my dear Sir," ſaid Charlotte, looking wiſtfully at him; "I entreat you to proceed."

"This is a nation of philoſophers," muttered Haſtings with a ſarcaſtic ſmile; "their very women are gifted with the genuine eſſence of patience! But let me ſee, his name, you ſay?—Why, faith, I am not quite certain, but I think I heard him called St. Ju—— or Julian, I forget which; I am no Roman Catholic, Mademoiſelle; I ſeldom trouble my head with the ſaints of any country; but this I can tell you, that a fellow like him we are ſpeaking of, is worth all you can

number in your calendar. I fancy he is a black ſwan amongſt the white Republicans and Royaliſts of the great nation; for I heard the ſame perſon, who pronounced his name afterwards, ſay with an oath, that ſuch was ever the end of ſimilar attempts when he interfered in them."

The ſurgeon's arrival now put a ſtop to further eulogiums on the young Frenchman. Charlotte penſively turned to the window; and while ſhe there waited to hear his opinion of Mr. Montague's ſituation, traced in fancy the manly form of her deliverer, and reflected with aſtoniſhment on the fortunate but unaccountable chain of human events that had repeatedly afforded protection from the ſame quarter, without furniſhing her with ability to repay the ſmalleſt part of the debt, by granting the trifling requeſt he had formerly made her.

While her thoughts were thus occupied, Haſtings was employed in aſſiſting the ſurgeon during his examination of Mr. Montague's wounds:—theſe were declared of ſuch a nature, as to render his removal from the Caſtle incompatible with ſafety. Haſtings ſtarted at the intelligence, and ſtaring the author of it in the face, aſked him, in an angry tone, what he meant by ſuch information? and why

why he made ſo many damned grimaces?—The gentleman was not in danger, was he?"

That was more, the other replied, than he could take upon him to ſay; but he repeated his firſt opinion, that the ſtate of his patient would not admit of a removal to any diſtance.—"The ſmalleſt movement," he ſaid, "might prove critical; it ought, of courſe, to be avoided."

Montague was therefore cautiouſly conveyed to one of the neareſt apartments, and proper attendants aſſigned to wait upon him.

This taſk, M. de Clermont and Charlotte, (who was now perfectly recovered from her late indiſpoſition), took upon themſelves to ſee arranged; and quietneſs being abſolutely neceſſary for the invalid, the ſurgeon and one domeſtic alone remained in his chamber till the morning was pretty far advanced.

To prevent another ſurpriſe by any of the roving bands ſwarming in the neighbourhood, every precaution that wiſdom or experience could dictate, was put in practice during the remainder of this unpleaſant night. Neither M. de Clermont nor Haſtings took a moment's repoſe, but flew from one place to another, inſpecting every thing themſelves, and directing

directing their truſty followers how to proceed for the purpoſe of future ſecurity.

That the conteſt of the preceding evening had been deſperately maintained, its conſequences ſufficiently witneſſed.—Three victims loſt their lives in the attack, and many more muſt have ſuffered, for the gallery was deluged in blood!

The Counteſs remained in her apartment the following day: her ſpirits continued low, and her health was injured by the ſhocking alarm ſhe had received.

In watching over the wants and diſtreſſes of others, Mademoiſelle de Cordet totally forgot ſhe had ever been implicated in the latter herſelf. Her attention to Madame de Narbonne and Mr. Montague was unremitting, and occupied her wholly through the ſubſequent day.

In the afternoon of that day ſhe prevailed on M. de Clermont to take ſome repoſe. Mr. Haſtings, however, would not liſten to her entreaties on the ſubject, and ſhe was at laſt forced to give up the ineffectual attempt.

The evening was now faſt retiring behind the darker veil of night; a ſort of ſullen gloom reigned around; the ſky was unuſually cloudy, yet a fearful ſtillneſs predominated, and Nature ſeemed awfully to pauſe in expectation of ſome terrific event.

M. de

M. de Clermont had long left his couch; and repairing to the great hall of the Caſtle, ſummoned his truſty adherents to receive directions for their different ſtations.

Mr. Haſtings, however, was not to be found. Midnight advanced; but convinced of his humane, though eccentric diſpoſition, it was ſuppoſed that he was not unprofitably employed, and no apprehenſions were as yet entertained for his ſafety.

Their guards took the different poſts aſſigned them; and the principals aſſembled in a room ſelected for that purpoſe.

Various reports had been brought in by the ſpies to whom that piece of duty more particularly belonged. As the night wore on, theſe began to ſubſide; and the minds of the party became comparatively compoſed from the calm appearance of all around them.

That ſome of the Brigands remained in the vicinity would not, however, admit of diſpute; and their fears were ſtill occaſionally kept alive by this diſagreeable certainty.

Mr. Haſtings was yet miſſing; his cool and active courage had been too ſerviceable not to feel the deprivation of ſuch a character, ſhould the hour of danger require his preſence.

M. de

M. de Clermont and his friends at length began to apprehend ſome accident had befallen him, and the former judged an enquiry expedient on the occaſion.

Juſt as he reached the door to depart for that purpoſe, an exclamation of horror from Charlotte, who was ſtanding at the window, arreſted his ſteps; and before he had time to aſk the meaning of it, an explanation by words was become unneceſſary. —Devaſtation and ruin were aſcending in awful columns of curling ſmoke and deſolating flames from a neighbouring village.

It had burſt forth almoſt inſtantaneouſly, and the terrific glare, now ſpread abroad amidſt the dark ſhades of night which yet enveloped the earth, appeared inconceivably dreadful! By the blaze of light ſo tremendouſly afforded, the wretched ſufferers were eaſily diſcovered hurrying to and fro, in all the agonies of wild diſtraction. Confuſion and terror in their moſt frightful forms were viſible on all ſides, and ſtiffened the beholders' ſenſes with horror.

In a few minutes longer the ſound of a multitude flying towards the Caſtle, was plainly diſtinguiſhable.

M. de

M. de Clermont, ſuſpecting the cauſe of the flames, but uncertain from what motive an approach was now undertaken, ruſhed through the court to procure the requiſite intelligence, and to give preparatory orders for whatever blow might again be in contemplation againſt them.

Hoſtile intentions, however, or apprehenſions of the enemy's return, were ſoon found to be equally groundleſs at preſent.

Mr. Haſtings appeared, followed by a train of miſerable beings, wringing their hands, and deploring their wretched deſtiny in terms of the bittereſt anguiſh and deſpair: he held an infant in his arms, ſcarcely ſnatched in time from the devouring flames, which had already ſcorched one of its little helpleſs hands, and the left ſide of its ſhoulder! Its father had fallen a victim to ſuffocation, when attempting to ſave his only child and its unfortunate mother, whoſe ſenſes had failed under the weight of ſo awful and ſudden a calamity.

A youth, with trembling ſteps, ſupported his aged parent, whoſe arm hung broken by his ſide, and whoſe grey hairs were drenched in the blood that copiouſly flowed from a wound on his head. One man, who had borne a dying wife from the ſcene of deſtruction, unable longer to ſuſtain his burden,

burden, let her drop from his hold, and ſtaggering a few paces diſtant, ſunk down againſt the Caſtle walls, and expired! Cries and frantic exclamations filled the air! Some ruſhing forward, eagerly endeavouring to enter the court as a ſafeguard againſt the purſuit of their deſtroyers, were thrown on the ground, and trodden upon by thoſe who tumultuouſly preſſed behind them, to obtain the ſame point of ſecurity; while others, in the frenzy of inſanity, recollecting ſome dear friend or relative left to periſh in the jaws of horror, wildly flew back to encounter, a ſecond time, thoſe evils which had already ſhook the ſeat of reaſon to its foundation.

As ſoon as ſurrounding circumſtances would admit of the intelligence, Haſtings briefly related the heads of it, and theſe proved in ſubſtance a confirmation of M. de Clermont's original ſuſpicions.

A few ſtragglers of the banditti, enraged at the diſappointment of their expected plunder, had continued to loiter in the environs, in the vain hope of ſome favourable incident occurring to reimburſe them for their ineffectual attempt upon the Caſtle. The precautions, however, ſo judiciouſly taken for its defence, and the conſequent warm reception they had every reaſon to expect, did not eſcape notice.

notice. If unſucceſsful in their firſt attack, the chance was certainly ſtill more againſt them on a ſecond one, when their number was ſo conſiderably diminiſhed, and their opponents fully prepared for their arrival. They prudently, therefore, renounced their intention; but hardened in miſchief, and inſenſible to pity, a retreat was judged impoſſible, without yielding, in ſome degree, to the indulgence of their natural ferocity, which ſoon evinced itſelf in pillaging the inhabitants, and ſetting fire to the villages through which they paſſed, committing the moſt unheard-of barbarities on all who had the misfortune to fall in their way, till ſuch time as Mr. Haſtings, informed of theſe proceedings, haſtened to the aſſiſtance of the neareſt hamlet, though too late to prevent the fatal effects of their vengeance from taking place.

As the earlier aſpect of the night ſeemed to promiſe a continuance of the tranquillity which was then predominant, Madame de Narbonne had been prevailed upon to take ſome repoſe. Apprehenſive of diſtreſſing conſequences, ſhould ſhe be ſuddenly awaked by any freſh tumult or alarm, the gentlemen now held a conſultation on the meaſures fitteſt to be purſued in the preſent conjuncture.

The

The court, on the northern ſide of the Caſtle, was the moſt remote from her apartment, and thither it was of courſe agreed to conduct the houſeleſs wretches, till ſome other method of providing for them could be determined upon.

Having ſettled this matter to the beſt of their ability, M. de Clermont and Mr. Haſtings next turned their attention to the ruined, and now nearly deſerted village. To it, therefore, they quickly repaired, with the view of rendering themſelves ſerviceable to any of the unhappy ſufferers who might yet be in a condition to benefit by their proffered humanity. But the Brigands were fled, and the objects of their cruelty no longer ſenſible of feeling it.

Silence, death, and deſolation reigned in every quarter; or, if the firſt was ſometimes broken, a departing groan, or the crackling of the flames alone produced the interruption, and all was immediately ſtill again:—but it was the ſtillneſs of nature in its moſt dreadful form, and produced a melancholy ſenſation of horror almoſt too powerful to ſtruggle againſt.

The gentlemen, after giving ſuch directions as appeared moſt neceſſary, and cauſing thoſe perſons to be removed who yet retained the ſmalleſt ſymptom of exiſtence, ſlowly and mournfully bent their

courſe

courſe to the Caſtle. During their ſilent progreſs, the craſh of falling ruins, accompanied by imaginary ſounds of human anguiſh, frequently obliged them to turn round, and pauſe for a few moments, undetermined whether to proceed forward, or retrace the ſame painful and deadly ſcenes over again. In ſome places, as the roofs of houſes fell inwardly, the flames aſcended with increaſed rapidity; in others, where they had already ſpent their fury, they were ſeen ſullenly dying away, till the ſtill ſmoking fragments alone marked the late courſe of their deſtructive violence.

Shades of human beings! you, who have been immolated at the bloody ſhrine of unfeeling ambition, of rapacity, or revenge! ſay, will not an awful day of reckoning hereafter arrive when the tears of affliction ſhall reach the throne of retribution—when the altar of truth ſhall be ſubſtituted for what is now falſely termed the Temple of Liberty, and the ſacrificers become the ſacrificed? Such has hitherto been the uniform courſe of Providence, that every vice carries its own puniſhment along with it; and the barbed arrow that we meant to leave quivering in the heart of a fellow-creature, recoils with redoubled force on our boſom!

Immutable

Immutable Juſtice! pure and unadulterated Spirit! may thy retributive hand lightly preſs the trembling heart of my relentleſs enemies, and illume the actions of my friends with thy brighteſt luſtre! So ſhall the ſelf-condemned ceaſe to hate me from apprehenſions of futurity; and the ſteady, the virtuous, and the good receive the well-earned reward of conſcious merit!

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